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Alpha and Omega

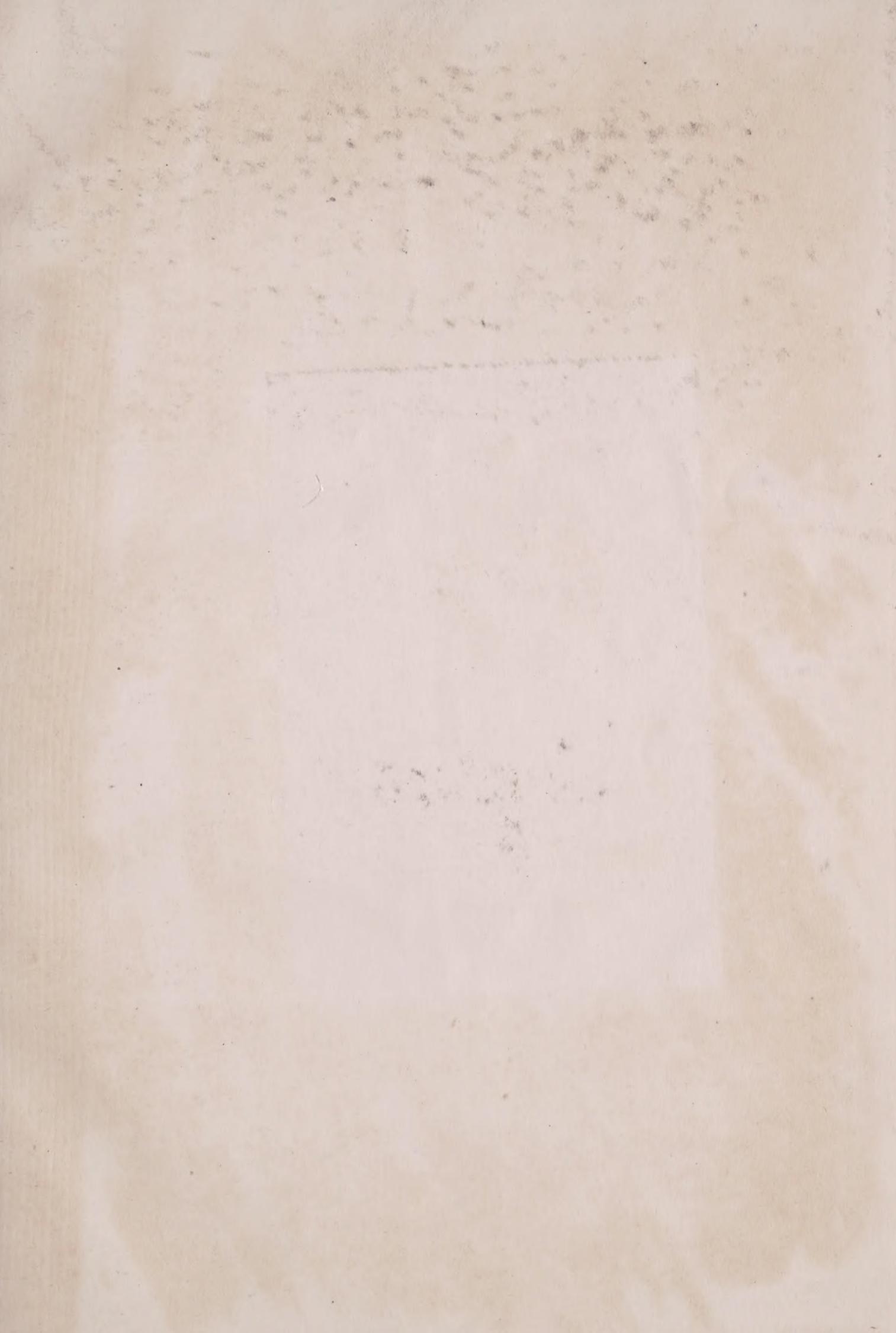


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"RAYMOND".

# Alpha and Omega AND Other Stories

BY  
ROSA S. JEROME

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BY

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## Preface

This little book of short stories deals with both truth and fiction, though fiction predominates. There is a good moral and something elevating in each story that will, we trust, be appreciated by both young and old. There is a touch of sentiment, also of humor. Perhaps many an otherwise gloomy evening will be brightened for the juniors by reading one of these stories.

Go, little book, from house to house,  
And consolation bring  
To those that weep and those that mourn,  
And those that try to sing.  
For some that sing have heavy hearts,  
Their smiles would make you sad.  
But you and I, my little book,  
Will try to make them glad.

This little book of stories short,  
Is sent out to be read,  
By lads and lasses, one and all,  
Ere they tumble into bed.  
It gives them a thought of others' joy,  
Likewise of others' strifes,  
And helps to set an example  
To them in their battles of life.



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# Raymond's Answer to a Letter from His Sister as to What He Wants Santa Claus to Bring

Sister, dear, these are the things I want Santa to bring:

## I.

I have no sisters three,  
But I'd like a Christmas tree,  
All lit up with candles bright,  
That gives such shining light.  
And if Santa Claus can find,  
Another sister just like mine,  
He may put her on the tree,  
And I will trot her on my knee,  
And I'll tell her stories,  
All about her baby brothers.

## II.

I don't care for rubber rings,  
For they look like baby's things.  
I want a great big drum,  
That I can beat with my thumb.  
I like marbles, a whistle, and a top,  
And an auto that never stops.  
I'd like a nice red hoop,  
And a big picture book.  
I like all that is called toys—  
But best of all a rocking horse,  
Just like other boys.

## III.

I like rubber balls ;  
But I don't care for dolls,  
For they are called girl's toys.  
I don't care for hogs and dogs,  
For they make so much noise.  
I don't care for nuts and candies sweet,

My mamma buys all that I can eat,  
I'd like a rocking chair,  
That I can sit in and comb my hair.  
I would like a nice gold watch,  
One that sings tick, tick, tock.

## IV.

I don't care for a big black hat,  
With plumes and tassels at the back,  
I'd like to have a little red cap.  
I'd like to have a chest of tools,  
That I can play with when I go to school,  
I'd like to have a brand new sled,  
With all the runners painted red.  
I'd like to have a box of blocks,  
With a picture of a fox.  
I'd like to have a rake and hoe,  
To work in the garden with Uncle Joe.

## V.

Tell Santa not to forget Tommy Butt,  
He does not live in a hut,  
But a little bungalow;  
On the east side it is very low,  
But the key-hole in the door,  
Stands just the same as yours,  
Where old Santa used to creep,  
And leave your things all in a heap.  
Now Tommy Butt don't want a sister,  
But he would like a baby brother,  
One that looks just like his father.

## VI.

I hope Santa won't forget us boys,  
For the girls have many toys.  
They like any thing that sings,  
And especially gold rings.  
Tell Santa we will be here another year,

Tommy Butt, I and Floyd Nuckles.  
Sister, save up your nickels,  
For there are many presents to be seen,  
In show windows that are not green.  
I think I'd like a jumping rope,  
But brother Harry says, "Ropes are for girls to  
jump."

### VII.

There's my cousin Ethel Bell,  
Santa, you know full well,  
She likes dishes and dolls,  
Just as well as I like balls,  
So please bring her a great big doll,  
One that can laugh and call mamma.  
Now, Ethel Bell has a cousin,  
And his name is Henry Newell,  
He has never fought a duel.  
Santa will find his stockings hanging,  
In a little white cottage near the organ.

### VIII.

I have so many cousins,  
I can not count them all ;  
There are Ruth and Arthur Thomas,  
They live now in Los Banos,  
So carry all their presents there,  
And leave them near their papa's chair,  
Then Uncle Ed in all his glee,  
Will give their presents to them by threes,  
Aunt Ellen will be there !  
And will spread a dinner fair,  
She'll look sweet in the gown she wears.

### IX.

There is Harold, a great big boy,  
But he would like some toys ;  
I think a kite or a balloon,

Something he can fly at noon—  
There is little Lee Thomas,  
He likes drums as well as harness.  
Maud and Annette Rose,  
And they like toys, you know,  
If they do play in the snow;  
Now, Santa, dear, remember all,  
And don't forget the girls' dolls.

## X.

There is Cousin Hibert Frank and all,  
I think they would like a rubber ball,  
To play with in the hall.  
Albert and Will, past the age for toys,  
But would like to be brought back,  
To childhood joys.  
When they were but little boys,  
Playing with their toys,  
With so much noise,  
I think they would like a girl  
With big blue eyes and golden curls.

## XI.

Elmer Gray is not forgotten,  
Though he has left off his baby stocking,  
Although he did not come to town,  
To see my brand new gown,  
I am going to write a line,  
And ask Santa Claus,  
Maybe he will get it in time,  
To leave them out,  
The last three I spoke about,  
And he may some day bring toys,  
To their little girls and boys.

## XII.

Our loved ones,  
I did not remember then,

But mamma's told me all about them.  
Edward, dear, God called him home,  
So he is not here.  
Dear little brother sweet,  
Has gone to kneel at Jesus' feet.  
Little Earl is not alone,  
For our loved ones are around the throne,  
Where Santa Claus never creeps,  
With his reindeers on swift feet.

### XIII.

Aunt Bell, Jennie and Mattie is three,  
They won't forget I am going to have a tree,  
And I hope they will all feel free  
To come and see my Christmas tree,  
For my papa is going to bring  
Me lots of little things,  
And my mamma won't forget  
That I want a big black cat.  
Uncle Lee and Charles are all;  
I am sure both of their wives are tall,  
And would like a woolen shawl.

### XIV.

As I have not asked for many things, I'll do my chores.  
While sister, dear, you take your choice,  
And don't listen to baby's voice,  
But select me the nicest toys,  
Then I can play with childish joy.  
I almost forgot little Henry Mc. wants a slate,  
But now as it is getting late,  
I'll be good and go to sleep,  
While Santa on tip-toes may creep,  
Down through our chimney, though it is very deep,  
And leave my things all in a heap.

RAYMOND.

# Alpha and Omega



# Alpha and Omega

It was Christmas morning. The snow was falling fast, when the carpenter's daughter opened the door as usual for the pint of milk for their scanty breakfast. To her surprise, there stood a large basket at the door filled almost to the top.

"Come, mother! quick, and see what has been sent to us for Christmas. Surely Santa Claus has not forgotten us this year if father is out of work."

The mother stepped to the door and assisted Eliza to carry in the large clothes basket, and set it on the table. They lifted the lid; there to their surprise lay two sleeping infants robed in silk. Mrs. Merrial clasped her hands and sank back into a chair near the table.

"My God!" she exclaimed. "Do we not have enough to do to care for our own family without taking some one else's offspring? Father has a hard time to feed the four of us and here are two more mouths to fill. Who has brought them here?"

"Let's call father," said Eliza, "and see what else there is in the basket. Perhaps we will find who has brought them here."

Mr. Merrial was called into the room. He was more than surprised to see the contents of the basket. As he stepped forward and saw the two little faces, side by side, he exclaimed: "What beautiful children! Perhaps God has sent them here for some purpose. Do not look so sad, little mother, we will do the best we can for the babies," he said, as he wiped the tears from his eyes. "How could any mother send such beautiful babies out in such a fierce storm? God have mercy on them!"

"Now, Eliza," said mother, "you warm some milk for the babies, while father and I take the darlings out of the basket into a warm room."

Little did they dream what the contents of the basket were as they lifted the little ones out in their long silken robes.

"They must be from wealthy parents or they would never wear such robes," exclaimed Mrs. Merrial, as her husband lifted out the first sleeping child. It opened its large blue eyes and looked into the woman's face almost with a smile on its lips.

"You darling," she said.

"Look, John, does it not look as our little Cora did when she was a few days old?"

"Yes," her husband said. "I remember well how little Cora looked, our darling."

Again he wiped the tears from his eyes. For God had called their baby home before it could lisp their names and it had only been two weeks since the snow had been shoveled away and the little mound of earth thrown open to lay away their baby of five months.

Mrs. Merrial clasped the little one closer to her breast and thanked God He had sent her darling home, for in likeness it was almost her own child. As she looked at the child again, she discovered a note pinned to the baby's dress. She opened the note and there in a beautiful hand writing were the words:

"Merry Christmas! I send my baby Omega to you. God bless her! Be good to my darling. May she find a happy home!  
Her Mother.

"Born Dec. 24, 18—."

The darlings, only a few hours old, had come to their home to live.

Omega was laid on the bed. As Mr. Merrial lifted the other gaping baby from its place in the basket, and handed it to the outstretched arms of his wife, he said: "This is our boy, little mother, the one we have been wanting so long," for their family consisted of girls. Mrs. Merrial kissed it and clasped it to her breast as she had done the other one. She felt she had her own baby home, the two looked so much alike. Yes, Mr. Merrial had his boy as he said, for this

was little Alpha. The note pinned to him read similar to the other.

The darlings were fed, and soon a little bed was arranged near the fire for the babies. The basket contained all that was necessary to add to the children's comfort. Someone had not forgotten even the nursing bottles so necessary for the babies. Their wardrobe was magnificent. It consisted of nothing but the finest material made very tastily. What reason a mother of wealth could have for giving away her babies was more than they could tell. The little clothes were taken out, examined by each member of the family, then placed in a bureau drawer until the basket was almost emptied. While removing a silk shawl from the basket, a letter fell to the floor. So far no clew had been found to the babies' identity. Perhaps the letter contained some information in regard to them. Mr. Merral opened the letter and read:

"Dec. 24, 18—.

"Merry Christmas to you all, my dear unknown friends! I send my infants to you for a time. Be good to them. How I love them! You wonder, I suppose, how a mother can be so cruel as to send her little ones away, and the world I know will judge me harshly, yet that same mother-love is in my bosom as other mothers have for their offspring. But cruel fate has separated them from me for a time. I shall come when you least expect me and claim my darlings.

"You wonder why these babies have been sent to your home when I am unknown to you. It is through my doctor I send them to your tender care. I have heard you are Christians; if I am not I want my babies reared by Christian people. Please do not let them know until the proper time that you are not their parents. Rear them in your name, treat them the same as if they were your own children. I know the world will say they are illegitimate children. I will swear with my right hand on a Bible that they

are born in lawful wedlock. God knows I am not guilty of a stain only in sending my babies away to be cared for by strangers. I feel confident you will be good to them. Take them into your arms, press them to your bosom, and ask God's blessing upon them as I have done and think that the same heart beats in love for these little ones, as your heart beats in love for the little one you laid to rest a few weeks ago.

"I am a stranger in your midst. I have only been here two weeks. As soon as I am able, I shall return to my home.

"Again I say, be good to my little ones. Hire the most competent nurse you can get for them until they are five years old. Then I want them placed in the hands of a good governess. As soon as they are old enough for music I will send them a grand piano. I want them to take lessons. Do not let them attend public school. I want them to have the best of care. Do not let them want for anything. In the bottom of this basket you will find a purse containing fifty dollars for the first month of the babies' keeping and another twenty-five for any other expense you deem necessary for their comfort. Each month you keep my babies a draft for fifty dollars on the Bank of New York will be sent to you for them. Should this amount not be sufficient to defray their expenses, you can draw on the bank for a larger sum at any time as there will always be money on deposit there for my darlings—Alpha and Omega.

"Should the babies be taken sick at any time, employ the best physician you can get, and if dangerously ill notify me through the bank. If one or both of them should die—but I try to banish this thought from my mind—I want to clasp my darlings to my bosom again, and shower a mother's love on them. If anything should happen to them, lay them to rest in the most beautiful style and place you can find regardless of expense for money is no object to me. I want my

babies to share my wealth even when I am separated from them. Should you move away at any time from your present home notify me through the bank. Remember! I shall come some day and claim my babies and take them home. God bless them!

"With love to you all, also to my dear babies, I remain their loving mother and your unseen friend."

Yes, this was a Merry Christmas for the carpenter and his little family. They almost felt rich now. This was more money than they had in the house for months past, and the sleeping infants in little Cora's crib seemed their own.

The children grew more beautiful each month and their little cooings could soon be heard all over the house. The shadow of death which had been cast over that little household a few months before was almost forgotten in the love they bore for the cooing infants.

As Mrs. Merrial clasped them to her bosom, she thanked God through her tears; although He had taken her own darling home, He had sent two beautiful babies to fill the vacancy in their hearts and home. Soon little Alpha and Omega became the pets of the family. Poor as Mrs. Merrial was she would rather have given up the money for the babies' keeping than to have given them up.

Until the babies were five years old they were reared with the most loving and tender care. No parents could have given children better care than Mr. and Mrs. Merrial did these. The story of the Christmas babies found on Mr. and Mrs. Merrial's porch on that stormy Christmas morning had almost died out of their thoughts as little Alpha and Omega would wait at the gate to give papa his evening kiss or run up street to help mamma carry her parcels home from the store. Never was Eliza or Lena too busy to assist their little brother and sister when they needed help, and never did they lose a chance to amuse them at play. But the

time had now drawn near when the babies' real mother requested that they be placed in the hands of a good governess. During these five years there had never been a month that Mr. and Mrs. Merrial had not received their check from the bank, evidence that a loving mother though separated from her little ones was keeping watch over them. Although separated from her yet they were not forgotten and the most costly presents and clothing were sent to them from month to month. In the spring of 18— the babies were placed in the care of a good governess, nor was anything left undone which would add to their comfort.

Months went by. The children learned rapidly. Omega was a lovable child and won the love of everyone. Mrs. Merrial often thought as she saw Omega trying to comfort her brother or some other poor child that she must be like her mother; with her loving blue eyes and her long golden curls falling over her shoulders, she was indeed a picture of beauty. Mrs. Merrial often thought no artist had ever painted such a picture as her little Omega would make. Her disposition was so different from her brother's; she was very quiet, never got into trouble, and was always ready to lend a helping hand to anyone who was in need. She was very affectionate with her parents, brother and sisters. Mrs. Merrial often thought she was like a ray of sunshine flitting about the house.

As the children were taken in charge by the governess who did not know but that they were Mrs. Merrial's own children, Mrs. Merrial insisted on having the children to herself an hour or so each morning and evening, and in pleasant weather could be seen Mrs. Merrial with her twins. "The most beautiful children in the town," everyone declared, and "the mother is so devoted to them."

Mrs. Merrial often laughed and told their governess she did not want the children to love her more than their mother. Omega would climb to her lap, put her arms around her

mother's neck and kiss her and say: "You are my bestest mamma. I will never love any one more than I do you." Then she would turn to her governess and say with a smile: "I love you; but I love my mamma and papa the best of all. For you know God can't give us but one mamma."

"Who told you that, darling?" asked Mrs. Merrial.

"Oh! my Sunday School teacher said so last Sunday; but don't you know, mamma, Alpha said on our way home from Sunday School that he dreamed he had another papa and mamma and his new mamma was so beautiful! She had on lovely jewels and rings on every finger. His father was a knight and rode a big black horse. He said he wished it was so."

Mrs. Merrial looked sad at the child's story and Omega could see her mamma's feelings were hurt. Then she hugged her closer and kissed her again and again and said: "O, mamma, how I love you; I love you better than any one," and she patted her mother on the cheek.

Alpha, with his roguish blue eyes came dancing to his mother's side. "Some day, mamma, I am going to have a beautiful mamma and a father-knight who rides on a big black horse. You know nurse used to read to us out of our story books about a queen-mother, and a father-knight. I have built my pictures ever since of a father-knight and a queen-mother sitting on a throne. Yes, Omega and I have played we had a queen-mother and a father-knight, and we were so happy while we were playing it."

At this Mrs. Merrial took her handkerchief and wiped her tears away. Omega seeing her mother's feelings were hurt said: "O, mamma, we only played it for fun. It was such fun when we imagined we had a queen-mother and a father-knight sitting on Alpha's black rocking-horse. You ought to see how stiff dollie sat there as if she was a real lady on a throne. And Tabbie mewed when we put Alpha's

pants on him and made him sit on the rocking-horse."

At this Mrs. Merrial smiled and the governess laughed aloud. It was so comical to see Omega picturing everything with her hands as if it were really so. Mrs. Merrial said to the children:

"Do you want a better mamma than I am?" Omega hugged her tightly and said:

"Mamma, dear, you are the best mamma in the world. Alpha thinks so too."

"Yes, I do think so," asserted Alpha; "but I'd like to have a queen for a mamma, and a father-knight who rides a big black horse, for then I would ride the horse sometimes, that I would, when the knight was asleep. Wouldn't I have fun, then? Omega could stay with you, mamma, for company and I would go to father-knight's castle to live. I would have servants to wait on me then. I would not have to fuss with my shoestrings when they get into a knot or to hunt for my top or ball. I would command my servants to do it."

"I do not think, my little man, that you ever fuss with your shoestrings now, Omega usually has that to do."

"So I am the servant that Alpha laughs about," said Omega, laughingly, as she clasped her little hands together.

Mamma reminded the children it was bed time and nurse put in her appearance and carried the youngsters off to bed, to dream of fairies, queen-mothers and father-knights.

As Mrs. Merrial was left alone to ponder over the children's tales, she thought perhaps some day Alpha's dream might come true, and she could not keep from crying, for she feared the time was drawing near when she must give up her babies. Alpha, so full of life and fun, ready for an answer to any question which might be put to him, but always in mischief. What fun he thought he was having the day he tore Omega's dollie's hair off to put a white cotton wig on her head! To fill his cup of mischief to the

full he cut her kitten's tail off—"to hear it cry," he said—while poor Omega, as gentle as a lamb came to her poor kitten's rescue, took it away from her cruel brother and bore it with tears in her eyes to her mother's room, exclaiming: "O, mamma, see what Alpha has done to my poor kitten! Will it die?"

"O, pshaw, girls don't know how to treat a kitten," said Alpha, who had followed her upstairs. "They are too stupid to have any fun. I am glad I am not a girl. I'd rather be a boy and cut kittens' tails off, than to be a girl and wear curls like Lord Fauntleroy."

"O, you wicked brother, to say such cruel things about my poor kitten!" hugging her kitten closer to her with the blood streaming out of its tail. "My poor Flossie," said poor Omega.

"O, that doesn't hurt her much," said Alpha. "That's good for her health. I only cut a tiny bit of her tail. I am sure it doesn't hurt her."

"That is what you said when you killed my poor canary bird, and the bird was really dead."

"Well, it did not hurt it then if it was dead. What are you talking about?"

The mother led Omega away with her poor kitten and sent Alpha to be put to bed by the nurse.

How different the two children were in disposition and temper, thought poor Mrs. Merrial. Omega had a gentle, loving temper. Alpha was as bold and rough as a lion.

Nine years have passed since little Alpha and Omega were first taken into the Merrial family. The children have grown very beautiful. Alpha, with his dancing blue eyes is as full of mischief as ever and very bright in his studies. He is ahead of Omega, although she declares she never saw him studying, and his governess often wonders how he can be so perfect in his lessons. Omega takes more to music

than other studies. At the age of nine years she was quite a musician. She had then taken lessons on the piano for four years and her governess declared she was further advanced in her music than most pupils who had taken lessons for a much longer time. Alpha is quite a violinist, and can accompany his sister on the piano. The two children had every opportunity in the world to become a bright man and woman, and it was the day-dream of Mrs. Merrial to make them so. Mrs. Merrial was taken suddenly ill. She lingered for a few weeks, and then passed away. She made her husband and daughters promise before her death that in case anything should happen to her they would notify the children's mother through the bank of her death. They promised to do so, and Mrs. Merrial passed away without a murmur. After Mrs. Merrial was laid to rest her husband notified the bank that his wife had died, but as his daughters were old enough to take charge of the children, they would like to keep them, as they had a good governess for them. They received no reply to this. Months went by, and still the money came just the same. Then Mr. Merrial decided to move away from Hartford and went to Danbury to live. Again he notified the bank of the change he intended to make. This time also he received no answer; but thinking everything was all right, he made the change. Months came and went, and no word did he receive from the bank. The children's support was entirely cut off. Mr. Merrial would not give up the children but did the best he could for them. He could not afford to keep a governess any longer for them, and for the first time the children were sent to the public school. Mr. Merrial tried again and again to hear from the bank in regard to the children's money, but did not succeed in doing so. As he did not know their mother's name, he finally gave up in despair of ever receiving any more for the children's keeping, but he loved them as his own and would do the same.

by them as if they were his own. Eliza was earning her own living now, but Lena was at home and took care of the children.

One day Mr. Merrial was taken home in a wagon. He had fallen from a building and was so badly hurt internally that he died in a few days. So Alpha and Omega were without father and mother. How they had missed their mother's care! Night after night Omega had cried herself to sleep for her mother, but she often said:

"I know mamma can never come to me, but I am going to try to meet mamma in Heaven. Oh, I wish I could go there now, mamma was so good to us," and she would not be comforted by any one. Now she had no father to comfort her. She and Alpha must fight their battles alone, for Lena must now take care of herself.

Their old nurse heard of the death of Mr. Merrial and knowing what bright, pretty children they were, she thought she could make a fortune out of them. Eliza and Lena, knowing she could rear them better than they could, consented to let her have them. They turned over to her what few trinkets their mother had preserved for them, also their mother's letter, to be kept with the children.

Mrs. McDonnell agreed never to take the children away without letting Eliza and Lena know where she was going to take them; but after she had them in her own hands she did as she liked with them. She made Alpha and Omega believe she was their own mother. They must take her name and never tell that they ever had any other mother and father than herself and her husband, who had been dead several years. It was hard for the children to take the name of McDonnell and very little did they look like Irish children; but fearing her they kept her secret. She left the town one evening with the twins, and for years Eliza and Lena never saw nor heard of Alpha and Omega.

Mrs. McDonnell had a few hundred dollars saved up and she kept the children in school for a few years with what money they could assist her in getting at night when she would make them take their violin and banjo out on the street and play at night, when they had drawn a crowd passing the hat for a collection. This often brought her several dollars. Everyone wondered at her having such beautiful children, so well educated for their ages and nothing like her in manners or looks. Often someone would say on the street so the children could hear:

"I don't see how that old Irish woman could raise those children like that. They look and act as if they had been reared in a princess's home, with a French governess, and not by an old Irish wash-woman."

Alpha and Omega could hardly restrain their tears when they would hear people talking like that, for they would think of their own dear father and mother, who were laid to rest. The nurse tried to make them believe they were her own children. She told them she was very poor and Mrs. Merrial, the woman they had called mother, had lost a little baby a week before they were born.

"She grieved over it so much I let her have my babies because we were poor and I had to help your father to make a living as he was sick and could not take care of us. I let you take Mrs. Merrial's name but I am really your mother, and you must never tell anyone I ever gave you away, or that you ever had any other home than with me."

Alpha and Omega did not credit this statement, but dared not tell her so for fear of her cruel treatment. She was about fifty years old when Mrs. Merrial first hired her to help take care of the babies. At that time she was a nurse; but ten years or more had past since that time and she was advancing in years. Very few people would hire her for a nurse, so she was obliged to take in washing for a living for

herself and the children. She would make them do the greater part of the washing out of their school hours.

Finally, she took to drinking. She had then had the care of the children for more than three years. She became very unkind to them and did not provide for them as she should. The children were proud and high-spirited and would not beg as she wanted them to do for a living. This aroused the cruelty in her. Night after night they played on the street. The people would take up a collection for them. If they went home with only a dollar or so, she would beat them because they did not bring more money, and accuse them of spending it for candies or cakes, things the children had not tasted for months. They were afraid to use their money for fear she would find it out and whip them for it.

They often cried themselves to sleep on their bed of straw and rags, for Mrs. McDonnell had sold her furniture and most of their clothes for liquor. The children often thought of their beautiful home, their father, mother, Eliza and Lena. Why did not their sisters come to them? They were not allowed to write to either of them and their sisters did not know how unkind their nurse would be when she had them all alone or surely they would never have let her have them.

Alpha had a few cents given to him that his so-called mother did not know of. He bought some paper, envelopes and stamps and wrote a number of times to his sisters, telling them how cruel nurse was to them and to please come and take them away from her or else they would die with hunger; but he received no reply to his letters. He concluded his sisters were dead or they had married and moved away and he knew not where they had gone. He became discouraged and never tried to hear from them again; but he was determined to take care of Omega himself. He was getting to be quite a boy now, but Omega, from cruel treatment and exposure was getting so frail it shocked him to

look at her. The bloom had left her cheeks and the brightness had gone from her eyes. He feared she was going to die. Oh! what could he do for poor Omega? If she should die, his only companion, he could not live. They were shunned by the better class of children and they were too well reared to associate with the lower class. It seemed to them they had not a friend in the world but each other; but this drew them nearer together than ever. The better class of children when they tried to play with them would make fun of their clothes and say:

“Your mother is a drunkard and drinks up your good clothes.”

Others would say:

“Your good clothes are all down in Harvey’s wine barrels.”

The children could not help crying, but that did not help them any. Alpha started out one morning in search of work. Some of the boys told him he could get papers to sell, and he could have half he received for the papers. He was delighted over this and went up the street whistling though his knees and elbows were out. He was happy for he was going to make enough money to buy Omega a new dress so she could be like other girls. He got an armful of papers and before night he had sold the last one of them, but as usual his cruel mother took the money from him and went up town to get drunk on it. When she came home she beat both of the children, then fell back of the door and was soon fast asleep.

Alpha had been planning all day to himself what he would do if his cruel mother should take away the money he had earned to buy Omega a dress, for she was in rags as well as himself. He did not care for himself, but he did not want to see his poor sick sister suffer. At last the thought occurred to him to run away from the place they called home. If he could persuade Omega to go with him,

they would leave the town and he would sell papers for a living. Some man had told him he believed his sister could get a position at a theater to sing and play. This thought had never occurred to him before. He would sell papers until his sister was entirely well, then he would get her into a theater. She could play almost any kind of an instrument and sing like a nightingale. He did not know why he had not thought of this before. Any place was better than living with old Mogy, as they called her to themselves. Old Mogy would be too drunk to hunt for them for a day or two and they would hide in a part of the town where she could not find them. He would sell papers for a few days, then he would get a room as old Mogy had done. He whispered his plans to Omega, who at first was afraid to run away, lest old Mogy should find them and bring them home and beat them to death.

"Never fear, little sister, you do as I want you to and we will come out all right," and Omega, with her loving ways and yielding disposition, gave up to her brother as if he were ten years her senior. She always gave up to Alpha. As quietly as two mice the children slipped through the house. They had no clothing to take with them. All they possessed in the world was what they had on and their violin and banjo, which both of them played. Old Mogy would have sold these long ago for whiskey, only she knew if she did the children would not have any way to earn her a few pennies to buy whiskey with. She had intended to get them a position on the stage in some theater and they would have their instruments to play on.

After they had slipped from the room Omega thought of the little tin box which their sister Eliza had given Mogy when they left home. She remembered hearing her say:

"There is something in this box which belonged to mother. The children, perhaps, will prize it in after years. It is of no value in itself, but keep it for them."

"Could we take the box with us?" whispered Omega.  
"Poor mamma," she said.

Alpha put his arms around her and kissed her and told her to run for the corner of Tenth and Bush street, and he would slip in and get the box without waking old Mogy who was good for a couple of days anyway, as she had two bottles of whiskey at her side. She would never leave the house while it lasted. Alpha was as good as his word and made his escape with the box for Omega. He could not find the key to the box which he had never seen, but he had got the box to please Omega. That was all he cared for. He was in hopes never to see old Mogy again, and if she found them he would fight her before he would let her take poor Omega back to that hog's nest as the boys called their home.

They wandered around the greater part of the night. At last they found an old shed or stable that would protect them from the cold, as there was some straw in it. Omega was nearly exhausted from hunger and walking. She declared she could not go a step farther, so the barn sheltered them the rest of the night. Omega was not able to walk any farther for she was really sick. Her hands were hot and feverish.

"I cannot go any farther, brother," she said. "I must die here."

"No, little sister, you are not going to die. I will take my banjo and go out on the street to play a few pieces. We are miles from old Mogy. She will not catch us now, so you lie still and I will bring you back something to eat."

"Oh, if I had a drink of milk!" she sobbed.

"I will get you some milk, dear sister; lie still."

So Alpha started out with a heavy heart and sore feet, hoping and praying he might make a few cents to buy a loaf of bread and some milk for Omega.

Poor Omega! She saw her brother leave the barn, and then she felt as if she were deserted. She tried to sleep on her bed of straw, but the thoughts whirling through her brain prevented her from doing so. She thought of old Mogy, how angry she would be when she found out they had deserted her. She wondered if the old woman would find them there, or if she would send one of the blue-coated policemen to bring them home. She would rather die than go back to old Mogy and suffer from her abuse. Then she thought of Eliza and Lena, and wondered if they could find them. O, if her sisters could only have known how mean old Mogy would be to them they would never have let her take them away! She loved the children, so she told the girls, and she had a few hundred dollars saved up which she would use for the children's education. She would do all in her power for them. The girls really thought she loved the twins and would do what was right by them, and as they had their own living to make they thought it would be better for the children to be with some one they knew than to be among entire strangers.

"O, if Eliza only knew how we have suffered," thought Omega, "she would never have let old Mogy have us; but perhaps she will never know and I may die here all alone. Then what will poor Alpha do without me? I must live for Alpha's sake. She closed her eyes and was soon in a gentle slumber, nor did she awake until she heard Alpha slipping into the barn, his eyes dancing with joy. He had a cup of milk, a loaf of bread, and some cookies for Omega, and a few cents in his pocket. But Omega was too weak to eat. She had gone without food so long she had lost her appetite. She drank part of the milk and felt much better, but was too weak to sit up. Poor Alpha was almost heartbroken when he saw his sister's condition.

"What shall I do, little sister?" he said. "You must have medicine and help. I will go for help."

"But where can you go?" inquired Omega. "There is no one we know."

"This morning when I was out," said Alpha, "I was playing on the banjo in front of a grocery store when a man came along. He stood and listened to my playing for some time. Then he asked me where I lived, and I told him I had no home. Then he said I ought to get on the stage somewhere. I told him that was what I would like to do and he promised to try to get a position for me. Now I was thinking I would try to find him, for he talked very kindly to me. I will tell him we have no home. Perhaps he will help us to find a place to live. I will tell him you are sick and ask him to help us."

But Alpha's search was in vain. He tried for hours to find his good friend but did not succeed. He returned to Omega who was still unable to sit up.

"Do not be discouraged, little girl," he said, "I will try to find him in the morning."

Another night the barn sheltered them; but by the break of day Alpha was out again with his banjo in search of the man who had talked so kindly the day before. He thought if he went down to the store about the same time that he had been there the morning before he might find him going to his work. This time he was successful, for he had not played more than one or two tunes when to his surprise there stood before him the man he was in search of.

"So you are here again, my little man," he said, smilingly. "You are a welcome visitor. I always enjoy music in the early morning, when everything is so quiet and the air is so pure and fresh. I hope to see you often," he said, as he slipped another half-dollar into the boy's hand and started off. Alpha detained him to tell the story of his and his sister's needs; but as he tried to talk the tears came to his eyes, and he choked up and could not utter a word for a few minutes. The kind gentleman saw he was in trouble

of some kind. He stepped to his side, and laid his hand on the boy's shoulder.

"What is the matter, my boy?" he asked. "What grieves you so?" And still Alpha could not speak. "Can I help you, my little man, in any way?" The child took courage and said: "O, my poor Omega," and burst out crying.

"Who is Omega?" the kind gentleman asked, and again the boy took courage and tried to talk.

"She is my sister. O, she is so sick and I fear she is going to die."

"Where is your sister?" asked the stranger in a kinder tone than ever, for he could see the boy felt very sad.

"O, sir, if you only knew our story you would pity us. My poor Omega," again he said.

"Brace up, my little man. Perhaps I may be able to do something for you and Omega if you will only tell me your story. Walk down a few blocks to my place of business and I will listen to you. Then I will see what I can do for you."

Alpha accepted the stranger's kind offer and walked to his store with him. He had dried his tears by this time and braced up like a man. Alpha told the gentleman of the beautiful home in which they had been reared with a governess to teach them and his loving father and mother to care for them. He told him their parents had died and left them and his sisters were not able to take care of them and had let their old nurse have them; and how she had run away with them and his sisters did not know where they were; how she was good to them at first but had taken to drinking and then was unkind to them; how she made them work and go out on the street at night, rain or shine, and play as long as any one would listen to them; how she would beat them when they went home because they did not get more money for her to buy whiskey with; how she kept them for days on dry bread and water and sometimes they

did not have even that much to eat, and no place to sleep, only on a bed of straw and rags.

"Often," he said, and his weak voice trembled, "we have returned home without a dry thread of clothes on and no fire to warm us by, and she would whip us and send us to bed without a crust of bread though we had not had since morning enough to satisfy hunger. Poor Omega! She is not as strong as I am and she could not stand such harsh treatment. She has been sick for months and would have starved to death before this if some kind lady had not given us a few pennies now and then to buy us something to eat. Omega did not want to buy anything to eat with her money. She was afraid old Mogy would find it out and beat us for it; but I insisted on buying food, for the money was given to us for that purpose and the first time we bought anything we took it home so old Mogy could share with us. She beat us almost to death because we spent the money for such 'truck' as she called it. She said we did not need it."

"Who is old Mogy?" asked the kind gentleman.

"She was our nurse when mother was alive and we were small. She was good and kind then, and did not drink. She made us call her mother, and she said she was our own mother, and we must never tell any one that we ever had any other mother than her. Now we have run away from her, and poor Omega is so sick," said the boy, and he commenced to cry.

"Where is Omega, now?" asked the man.

"We found an old barn down here in the outskirts of town. We took shelter there the first night we ran away, and poor Omega is too sick to leave there. O, won't you do something for my sister, kind sir? I fear she will die."

The stranger had been listening attentively to the story. He was struck by the boy's marvelous beauty and his touching words. He could tell by his expression that every word

he uttered was true, and was deeply affected thereby.

"I will go with you to see Omega," he said, and the boy's eyes brightened as they turned to go.

When they reached the miserable old shed where Omega was, she was unconscious and did not recognize her brother, but kept talking about old Mogy, and wondered if she would find them there. Then she called for Alpha, but did not recognize him when he spoke to her. She startled at his voice and whispered:

"Is that Mogy?"

Poor Alpha could not keep from crying, and kind Mr. Norton saw that she was in a critical condition. He told Alpha to remain with his sister until he could go for a carriage to take Omega and himself to his house. It was not long until Mr. Norton returned with his kind wife to the children's place of refuge. They carried Omega out and laid her on a bed in the carriage and drove as fast as they could to their beautiful home. Omega was carried into the house and kind Mrs. Norton sponged her off and put clean clothes on her and put her into her own daughter's bed which had not been occupied for months. When she was laid between the clean linen sheets, Omega fell into a gentle slumber. Mrs. Norton watched by her side, while her husband went for a physician. The doctor said that the child had brain fever and was so low she would not recover unless she had the best of care; but he knew she would not lack for such in the kind hands of Mrs. Norton. He had been their physician for years and knew what she was in sickness.

The tears came to Mrs. Norton's eyes when the doctor said this for it recalled to her memory how her poor Lillian had lain in the same bed and how she had watched by the child before God had called her home a few months before. She could not take her eyes off Omega as she lay there unconscious. She thought she was the most beautiful child she had ever seen. Her long golden curls lay on the

pillow, matted with straw from her resting place two nights before. Mr. Norton said he had needed a boy for some time to help him in the store, so Alpha could have a home with his sister. Mr. Norton bought him some clothes and when Alpha had put them on you would hardly recognize him as the ragged urchin who had played the banjo in front of the store in the morning. Mr. Norton thought, as he saw Alpha seated at his dinner-table, that he was the most gentlemanly little fellow he had ever seen for his age and the way he had been abused; for Alpha still had scars on his body where old Mogy had beat him. The wounds she had made on his body the night he ran away commenced to bleed as he removed the ragged shirt from his shoulders, so Mr. Norton had the doctor dress his wounds as well as Omega's for she had deep wounds on her body also.

"Poor child," said Mrs. Norton, as the doctor was dressing her wounds, "how much she must have suffered while with that old woman."

"Old Mogy should be punished for her ill treatment of the children," said the doctor, and Mrs. Norton thought so, too.

It was weeks before Omega could even sit up; but under the kind, loving care of Mrs. Norton, in a few months she was quite herself again.

Now we will return to old Mogy. She did not miss the children for a couple of days for she was too drunk to know anything; but when she sobered up she could not find them and was very angry. She hunted for them for days and went at night where they used to play on the street corner, but could not find them or hear anything of them. She made her complaint to a policeman about the children running away. The chief of police was notified and he was on the lookout for them. Not knowing how unkind she was to them, he intended to take them home to her. But months went by and she could hear nothing of the children. She

had not the money to buy whiskey with as she had when the children were with her; but still she got her liquor. She did not give up hunting for the children for she wanted to punish them if possible for running away. But Alpha and Omega were too far away from her and too secure in kind Mrs. Norton's house for old Mogy to find them. The vengeance she swore on them when she was intoxicated had no effect on the children. They were happy and contented where they were.

Months ran into a year, and still old Mogy never heard of the children. Mrs. Norton sent them to school until they graduated from the public school, then Alpha thought he had education enough and wanted to quit school and get a position on a salary so he would be able to assist Omega to finish her education; but Mr. and Mrs. Norton would not consent for him to do so. They told him they wanted him to go to high school and fit himself for a higher position than a common clerk. So Alpha assisted Mr. Norton in the store during his hours out of school and he and Omega were sent to high school. Mr. and Mrs. Norton treated the children the same as if they were their own for they had no children on whom to lavish their wealth. Mrs. Norton declared she could not keep house without Omega and she was always worried when the girl was out of her sight, for fear something would happen to her. Alpha and Omega had a great desire for stage life, and Mr. and Mrs. Norton could not persuade them to give it up. So Omega was allowed to accept a position at one of the grandest theaters in the city.

During her stay at Mrs. Norton's Omega had won many friends. Among them was the son of a wealthy merchant who had met Omega some months before. At the time of their meeting Mr. Benton was paying his attentions to an heiress, Miss Violet Howard. Violet became very jealous of Omega when she saw that Mr. Benton had taken a fancy

to her, and took it on herself to tell him the story of the two waifs at Mr. Norton's house. With a sneer she said:

"I am more than surprised at you, Herbert, for paying so much attention to waifs. I always knew you were kind-hearted, but I did not think you would go to the street to select your company. I thought you were reared in better society than that. For my part I cannot endure such company."

She curled up her nose and turned around on her heels with a foolish laugh, then faced Herbert again waiting for the young man's reply.

"I am very thankful to you, Miss Howard, for your information in regard to Miss Merrial; but sometimes we entertain angels unawares. I do not look into the past; it is with the future I am concerned. For my part, I consider Miss Merrial a perfect lady, worthy of anyone's friendship."

Violet turned red at this sentence and made several sneering remarks, concluding in a haughty tone with:

"I see you have fallen in love with the waif as many others have done. There is nothing to her, only she has a handsome face."

Herbert Benton thought differently. He was ready to defend Omega for he thought she was one of the noblest young women he had ever met. He had been looking for days for a chance to ask Omega to be his wife. He feared to do so, even with the advantages of his wealth, for he thought if Omega should refuse him his life would be ruined. He did not care for what Violet Howard or the world thought of him. His only thoughts were of Omega and his love for her.

The evening came at last to which Omega had been looking forward for weeks past, when she should make her first appearance on the stage. Mrs. Norton had used excellent taste in selecting Omega's costume for this first night. It was a dainty white silk dress which fitted her delicate form

very closely and added to her beauty. She was greeted with applause at her entrance.

Mrs. Norton was indeed a proud mother. She thought Omega looked as if she had been sent down from heaven. She knew the girl would have many admirers. Herbert Benton was there. He could not take his eyes off her. He thought she was the loveliest of human beings. Then the stinging words of Violet flashed to his memory and he wondered how anyone could be so cruel to one so lovely as Omega was. He knew jealousy was the cause of it.

When the first performance was over, friends congratulated Omega on her grand success as an actress. As Mr. Benton handed her a large bouquet of tea roses, Violet Howard made her appearance on the scene. She said:

"I, for my part, can hardly see how anyone so low can rise to such a high position. Some people can start out in rags and pick banjos on street corners and if they fall into the hands of kind people who have pity for them, they are taken to a king's palace and cared for because there is a spark of beauty lingering about their countenance. I, for my part, do not care to associate with such people." And she turned up her nose and walked away.

The stinging words of Violet had reached the ears of Omega and her feelings were crushed. She staggered and fell into Mother Norton's arms. As she did so, Violet brushed by her with her silken skirts rustling at Omega's side. Again she spoke:

"Carry the waif home and put her to bed. It won't be the first time it has been done."

Friends gathered around Omega. Among them was a strange face. From the appearance of the person she was a lady of wealth. She had heard the stinging words of Violet and as she handed Mrs. Norton her card she asked permission to call on the young lady as soon as she recovered, which she hoped would be soon.

"I am struck with her marvelous beauty," she said, and the wonderful talent she possesses. I would like to know something of the young lady's history. Perhaps I may be of some assistance to her."

Mrs. Norton thanked her for the interest she had manifested in Omega, and told her she would be pleased to have her call at any time. She gave the lady her card, but there was no time for further conversation as a carriage was at the door to take Omega home. For the first time Mrs. Norton noticed the address on the card. She was more than surprised when she saw the name Madam Van Lone. She had read in the daily paper that Madam Van Lone had arrived from Paris and intended to remain in the city for a time on account of poor health. Mrs. Norton felt herself tremble as she read the name. What could Madam Van Lone want to interview her Omega for? A feeling came over her that she was about to lose her girl.

Madam Van Lone made her appearance at the Norton's the next afternoon and asked permission to see the young lady. She was shown to the drawing-room to await Omega's appearance. In a few minutes Omega was in her presence. Madam Van Lone rose to her feet and met Omega as she entered the door.

"Miss Norton, I believe," said Madam Van Lone. "I am happy to meet you."

Omega's weak frame trembled as she took the hand Madam Van Lone extended.

"I am sorry," her visitor continued, "that you had the misfortune to faint last evening, after such an excellent performance. I cannot tell when I have enjoyed singing more than I did last evening. You have a wonderful voice and could make a fortune if you could go to France and take lessons for a short time."

"I feel very grateful to you, Madam Van Lone, for the compliment you have given me in regard to my singing. I do not deserve so much praise."

"May I ask how long you have been on the stage?"

"Last evening was my first appearance on any stage. I used to play some in public, however, before I came to Mother Norton's."

"Then Mrs. Norton is not your own mother?"

"No, madam," said Omega, and her face changed to a deathly white as she thought of the stinging words of Violet Howard the night before. "Mrs. Norton has been a good kind mother to us."

"Have you a sister?"

"No, madam, but I have a twin brother. His name is Alpha."

Now it was Madam Van Lone who turned pale.

"Have I hurt you?" asked the gentle voice of Omega, as she arose and stood by the side of Madam Van Lone who sank back into the chair apparently exhausted.

"No, dear, only the name is quite a favorite with me and it recalls to my memory an incident which happened years ago. Would you mind telling me your first name, or a part of your history?" asked Madam Van Lone, "before you came to Mrs. Norton's to live? I mean, you see I feel interested in you. Pardon me for speaking of it for I would not hurt your feelings but I heard the stinging words of Miss Howard last evening. I met her at a banquet a few evenings ago and was quite surprised at her shocking remarks. At the same time my heart went out to you as if you were my own daughter. I had a daughter, once. She left me when an infant. I have been childless since. Worlds would I give, were they mine, if I could see that infant grown into womanhood as you have grown. I imagine she would have been as beautiful as you are."

"Thank you, Madam Van Lone," said Omega, as she saw the tears gather in her visitor's eyes, her heart touched for one who had had trouble as well as herself.

Madam Van Lone watched every movement of Omega and for the first time since the conversation commenced she noticed a likeness to a photograph of herself taken years ago. Again the tears came to her eyes. Omega placed her soft hand on Madam Van Lone's forehead. The woman hid her face for a moment in her handkerchief and sobbed aloud.

"I am sorry," said Omega, "that I have caused you such deep pain," beginning to cry herself.

"Do not be grieved, my child. I shall be better in a few moments." Madam Van Lone calmed herself and again asked Omega her name. When she mentioned Omega Merrial, Madam Van Lone uttered a low cry and fainted. Omega rang for help and Madam Van Lone was soon restored to consciousness. She took her departure from the Nortons' without any explanation and Omega was left to ponder over her visitor's strange actions.

As soon as Alpha returned from the store, she related the experiences of the afternoon. Alpha was quite surprised as well as Mr. and Mrs. Norton, for they could not understand Madam Van Lone's conduct.

The next morning Mrs. Norton received a note in an unknown writing asking her to call at an early date at a certain number on Linden street and Madam Van Lone's name appeared at the bottom of the note. This was another surprise to Mrs. Norton. She could not understand why Madam Van Lone had sent for her. She thought perhaps her visit to Madam Van Lone might reveal something of the whereabouts of Alpha's and Omega's sisters as they had tried very hard to find out where they were living.

Madam Van Lone was seated in her easy chair when a servant entered bearing Mrs. Norton's card.

"Show the lady in at once," said Madam Van Lone. Mrs. Norton was shown into Madam Van Lone's private parlor. Madam Van Lone arose and extended her hand to Mrs. Norton.

"I am glad to see you. I trust you will pardon me for intruding on your time and patience. I suppose you will most certainly realize why I have sent for you. I feel a deep concern in the young lady at your house. She tells me she is not your daughter but that you have been a good, kind, loving mother to her, her own parents being dead. You may be able to help me unravel a mystery I shall never be able to solve by myself. How long have you had this young lady with you?"

"Nearly five years," said kind Mrs. Norton, who had a voice like a cooing dove.

"Would you mind telling me what you know in regard to her history?"

Mrs. Norton related Alpha's and Omega's history just as she had heard it thousands of times from the children. She told how their parents had died and their sisters had given them to their old nurse; how she had abused them and had made them work to buy her liquor and they had run away from her; how Mr. Norton had first seen Alpha; how sick Omega was when they found her in an old shed and they had taken care of them ever since.

"You do not know where their sisters are now?" asked Madam Van Lone.

"No, the children never heard from them after old Mogy as they called her, had run away with them."

Then she asked:

"Are you sure Mr. and Mrs. Merrial were their own parents?"

"All I know is what the children have told me. They said their parents were wealthy when they were little. They had a nurse, and then a French governess. After their mother died, their father lost his money in some way and the children were then sent to public school."

Madam Van Lone listened attentively to Mrs. Norton's story of the children. Then again her own likeness to

Omega flashed before her eyes. She rose from her chair, went to a trunk, and returned with a photograph. She asked Mrs. Norton if she had ever seen anyone who looked like that.

"Great Heavens!" exclaimed Mrs. Norton. "It is Omega herself. Where did you get this photograph?"

"Can we send for Omega?" asked Madam Van Lone. "Then I will tell you my story and why this picture looks so much like her."

It was not long until Omega was in Madam Van Lone's parlor. She almost had the appearance of an angel to Madam Van Lone as she entered her door. With her beautiful blue eyes and golden hair, with her white dress and loving smiles she looked so pure and sweet that Madam Van Lone was almost tempted to clasp her to her bosom and tell her her secret but dared not do so for fear of startling her. When Omega was questioned in regard to her parents she could tell no more than Mrs. Norton had already done. If she only knew where her sisters were living she might be able to find out something in regard to their birth. Madam Van Lone drew a chair near Omega and sitting down beside her, took the girl's hands in hers and kissed them.

"Now do not be frightened, dear, but listen to my story. It is a long, sad one. Some years ago, I was young and beautiful like you."

Omega looked in Madam Van Lone's face and thought she had not changed much. Although her hair was slightly streaked with gray above her temples, and her face bore lines of sorrow, she was still very handsome in face and form. Twenty years of anxiety and grief had changed the once beautiful girl to a motherly looking lady; yet Omega thought she had never seen anyone so beautiful as Madam Van Lone.

"When I was nearly twenty years old I had many suitors. Among them was Sir William Van Lone, who was to be his uncle's heir, providing Sir William married to please him. Lord Dunnreith had a wife selected for his nephew, a woman who had large possessions and great wealth. She was not a pretty girl, but she had every advantage in the world and lacked for nothing which money could buy. Sir William did not see things as his uncle did. He thought he was capable of choosing a wife for himself. His uncle lavished all his wealth upon him, but should he displease his uncle his means of support would be cut off.

"When Sir William was about twenty-two years of age he was invited to a big dinner party at Lady Isabel Domes' house. I had the honor of being there that evening, as my aunt was quite a friend of Lady Isabel Domes, though not her equal in rank. I was introduced to Sir William that evening, and as I have said to my friends, it was love at first sight. He dared not let his uncle find it out, but came secretly to my house, evening after evening, until he went so far as to ask me to be his wife. We were both young and because of our love for each other we did not realize the trouble which would befall Sir William through such a marriage. We were secretly married, my husband thinking he could arrange everything satisfactory with his uncle if he knew an irrevocable step had been taken. His uncle being of a stern nature, swore vengeance on his nephew if he did not marry to suit him. Not a pound of his money should he have. This naturally justified us in living apart, we thought, keeping our marriage a secret. Not one of our relatives or friends knew of our marriage.

"Sir William was a faithful husband to me, nor did I know a want that money could supply. All the request he made of me was that I keep his secret. If it should be revealed he, as well as myself, would suffer the consequences. We thought as Lord Dunnreith was advancing in years, he

would not live much longer. Then Sir William would be his sole heir. He would announce our marriage publicly, and the world would receive me as Lady Dunnreith. Being true to me the uncle could not persuade Sir William to marry the woman he had selected for his wife, though he had to show courtesy to her. It gave me considerable pain to see my husband so kind to another; but I dared not reveal our secret. He assured me at all our meetings no one had his heart but me, and he would make it known to the world at the first possible moment he could do so. I had confidence in him and I knew he loved me. He devoted himself to me whenever he could do so without fear of detection.

"We had kept our secret about eighteen months, when I realized I was to be a mother. What should I do? I could not stay with my aunt as she was a great friend of Lady Isabel Domes, and Lady Isabel was very intimate with Lord Dunnreith. Our secret would be found out, or my aunt would feel I had disgraced her as well as myself for life. I dared not stay there. Weeks went by before I had a chance to talk with my husband alone and during those anxious hours I had decided to go abroad until it was over. I could sing and play as Omega does. I had had many opportunities to go on the stage, but my aunt would not allow me to accept such a position. She was not rich but had moderate means, enough for us both without me accepting a stage position. My parents had died a few years before and as she was the only relative I had she sent for me to make my home with her. She had been kind to me and I could not disgrace her, neither could I let our secret be known.

"As soon as I saw my husband alone I told him my trouble. I could see he was affected by it, although he was not unkind to me. Sir William could not be unkind to any one. He was deeply grieved because he must give me up and send me alone to a foreign country as I had planned.

He wanted to be with me and my child when it came, but this was impossible, so we planned together as best he could. He said he did not want our baby nor me to want for anything. Things were arranged to send me to a foreign country and I, with a competent nurse, started for parts unknown to me. I would rather have died there than be torn away from my husband at that time, but I realized it must be so. He had made me promise I would return home as soon as I was able to travel, for he could not have me so far away from him so long. I was to find a competent woman with whom to leave my baby on a fair salary and return to my aunt's as soon as I was able to travel. I made my aunt believe I had accepted a position on the stage for a few months and she finally gave her consent to my going abroad.

Our first stop was at Lanark. There Sir William came to see me under an assumed name and stayed with me for several days. It nearly broke my heart to have him return to his uncle's, and leave me alone. He promised to write as often as he could and he kept his word. His letters were so affectionate and encouraging that I dared not give up in despair, but looked forward to the time when I could have my husband and child with me, and we could be happy together. My husband pressed me to his bosom when he left me.

“‘Darling,’ he said, ‘place our baby in good hands, and I assure you it shall not want, neither shall you. God grant that I may have you both with me in a short time! I will place enough money in any bank you suggest for the support of our child until we can claim it as our own. Money is no object to me, I am praying for the time to come when I can have you and baby with me, never to part until death parts us.’ He pressed in my hand, as he bade me goodbye, a little gold necklace and ring. ‘This,’ he said, ‘is to be

placed on the neck and finger of our darling in memory of its father.' He kissed me goodbye and returned to his home.

"I soon knew that Lanark was not the place in which I wanted my baby born and decided to go to America. I thought the people would be kind to me there. I sailed as soon as I could for New York, and hearing Hartford spoken of as a beautiful city, I went there one day, took a fancy to the city and decided to remain. I had been there but two weeks when I became the mother of two beautiful children —a boy and a girl. I did not tell my history to my physician or nurse. I only said that cruel fate must separate me for a time from my babies and asked the doctor if he knew of a good, competent, Christian woman with whom I could leave them for a time at a fair salary. He told me of a woman whom he had attended several months before who had just lost her baby. She was a good as well as competent woman to care for children and he was sure my babies would receive good care in her hands.

"I kissed my darlings, pressed them to my bosom, gave them their names—Alpha and Omega—and asked God's blessing upon them. Then they were placed in a basket with an expensive wardrobe and money to pay for a month's keeping for the two with a note to the kind lady whom I hoped would take them, telling her where and how she was to get the money for the babies. I sent my darlings out in this cruel world to be cared for by strangers. God forgive me for doing so!" and she burst into tears. It was some time before she could resume her story and when she did it was in broken tones.

"All the consolation I had in giving my babies up was that I was soon to return to my husband, who was dearer to me than life. In a few weeks I left America and my darlings. It nearly broke my heart to do so but I could not take them with me. I returned to my aunt's and for several years was where I could see my husband occasionally. Then Lord

Dunnreith's health began to fail him and he insisted on his nephew taking him to Italy. This meant to me a separation from my husband, perhaps for years, anyway until after Lord Dunnreith's death. My husband wrote to me as often as he could, but he was afraid our secret in some way would reveal itself.

"He could see his uncle was failing and did not write as often as he would have liked to do. Sometimes it was months before I heard from him, yet I consoled myself the best I could that he and the babies were all right. I would be notified through the bank if the babies were not. I was in hopes soon to be happy with my husband and babies, but such was not to be my lot. The worry and grief caused my health to fail me and for two years I was almost a wreck. Then I was taken seriously ill and lingered for months before I was able to sit up. I did not want for anything. My deepest grief was that my husband had ceased to write to me.

"As soon as I was able to travel I went to Italy, hoping to find my husband. As soon as I arrived there I heard of Lord Dunnreith's death; also the death of his nephew, Sir William, who died shortly after his uncle without leaving an heir. I made my marriage with Sir William public and claimed his estate. The world doubted me at first, but when all proofs were brought forward the world hadn't the slightest doubt of my story. When I came into possession of my husband's wealth I at once set about to find my babies. I wrote to the bank to find out where they were. The money for the children's support had been cut off for some cause. I cannot account for this only that my husband, through his uncle's prolonged illness and death and his own lingering sickness had forgotten our babies, although this will remain a mystery to me. It was found out afterward, through valuable papers my husband had left,

that his wife and offspring were the sole heirs to his estate, so he was faithful to us until death.

"I traveled from place to place in search of my babies, but I could hear nothing of them. In my memory they had grown dearer than my own life, for they were all I had, then. I returned to Hartford. The Merrial family had moved away, no one knew where. I almost gave up in despair of finding my darlings; but I have kept on traveling from place to place, hoping to find them. The only sure clue I knew by which I would be able to find them was their unusual names. Now, my dear Omega, there is not the slightest doubt in my mind, but that you are my little Omega." She clasped the girl to her bosom and sank back upon the sofa in a dead faint.

Omega and Mrs. Norton were spellbound. They had listened attentively to Madam Van Lone's story and neither had the slightest doubt but that it was true and Alpha and Omega were really Madam Van Lone's children. Alpha was sent for at once and Omega told him the story in as few words as possible, while Mrs. Norton and the servants were bringing Madam Van Lone back to consciousness. She was so exhausted from her long story she was not able to talk any more then. Mrs. Norton with the two children remained with her the rest of the evening. Madam Van Lone would not consent for Alpha and Omega to leave her for fear she would lose them again.

Omega remembered the little box they had brought from old Mogy's hut the night they ran away. They had no key to open the box with, so she had stored it away all these years thinking to get a key for it so as not to break the lock. Omega sent Alpha to get the box and have a key fitted to the lock. Alpha returned in a few hours with the box, which was carried into Madam Van Lone's presence and opened. She gave a little scream as she saw the little necklace and ring fall to the floor. She recognized them at

once. Yes, these were her babies' jewelry, the same pieces Sir William had kissed and given to her to place on the neck of their new-born child. She took the little necklace and ring in her hand, kissed them as their father had done years before, then pressed them to her bosom and thanked God, through her tears, she had found her children. Grown as they were into manhood and womanhood, yet they were hers. The letter in her own handwriting was also preserved in the box. In looking at the locket, they touched a little spring which in all probability had not been discovered before. The locket flew open and revealed Sir William's picture, a facsimile of the one Madam Van Lone had worn on her neck since her wedding morn. There could be no doubt but that their father wanted his little one to wear his picture unknown to it as well as his wife, though death had deprived Alpha and Omega of a loving father, but they were thrown into the hands of a kind, loving mother, who would sacrifice her life for her children.

Three years have passed since Madam Van Lone first had the pleasure of being called mother by her children. She has a son and daughter of whom to be proud—the most beautiful and accomplished young people in the town. The stinging remarks of Violet Howard had no effect on Omega's feelings as she went about with her own mother. Madam Van Lone, with her wealth, could buy and sell Violet Howard a number of times. Violet tried to be her best friend, and Omega was not unladylike enough to treat her unkindly; but they could never be intimate.

Madam Van Lone would look at her children and think how much Alpha looked and acted like his father, although he had never seen him; and Omega was the image of herself at the girl's age. Many wealthy gentlemen sought Omega's hand in marriage; but she chose the one who had been kind to her and loved her when he knew she was an outcast, and this one had been Violet Howard's lover before

he met Omega. (He had title as well as wealth and possessions himself.)

Alpha married the daughter of Dr. Stone, the physician who attended to the children's wounds when they first entered the Norton home.

Alpha and Omega in their love for their own mother did not forget their adopted father and mother, the Merrials, nor the kindness of Mr. and Mrs. Norton, who had been a kind father and mother to them in time of need.

Madam Van Lone did not forget to reward them for their kindness. She searched for Eliza and Lena until she found them and rewarded them for their kindness to her babies. They were both sorely grieved when they found how unkind their old nurse had been to them.

Old Mogy was never heard of by the children after they left her; but it is to be hoped she received her just punishment for her unkindness to Alpha and Omega.

THE END.

# **Elsie Graham and Her Mother**



# Elsie Graham and Her Mother

Elsie Graham's father died when she was but three years old. Her mother was very poor and had to work for a livelihood for herself and child. Mrs. Graham's only means of support was her needle. She worked early and late, but only succeeded in making a little more than a living. Her greatest desire was to lay up a small sum of money to educate Elsie. As she was a bright child, her mother wanted her to make her mark in the world. Mrs. Graham expected some day to make a noble lady out of her daughter.

At the commencement of this story Elsie was fourteen years old and a very pretty girl, but we are sorry to say she was a very disobedient child. She had been sick a good deal and her mother had petted and humored her, in order to get along with her, for Mrs. Graham was in delicate health herself.

Elsie was getting along nicely at school. She stood in class with the average of children of her age, although she had never been to school very much. Her mother was proud to know her daughter was getting along so well at school.

Mrs. Graham worked harder each day in order to obtain books and suitable clothing for her child, so she would not be conspicuous among the other children. Mrs. Graham had to economize very closely to keep Elsie looking like other children for she was very hard on her clothing, especially on her shoes. Elsie never dreamed what a sacrifice her poor mother made to keep her looking so nice and so comfortable. Several nice dresses always hung in Elsie's closet ready for her any time she needed them; also a nice pair of shoes could be found dusted and sitting on the shelf that her mother had dusted and put there long after Elsie's eyes had been closed in sleep for the night. During the hours of the day, Mrs. Graham had to sew for other

people, and her own house work, sewing and mending must be done while most mothers were fast asleep in bed.

Elsie did very little work to help her mother. She could have been of great assistance to her if she had chosen. Every night or two there was a new book brought home from the school library. Elsie had no time to do anything but read. Sometimes her mother would say:

“Elsie, dear, won’t you wash the supper dishes, for mother’s very tired, for I have worked hard to-day, dear, to finish Mrs. Brown’s dress?”

“That’s always the way; I never have time to read like other girls; I always have to work all the time. How do you suppose I’ll ever make a teacher if you don’t give me time to read or study?”

Then a fit of sobbing would come to Elsie. Her mother would answer:

“My dear child, I try to give you every minute I can for your studies. Let me ask you, my dear, how much have you done to help mother this week? To-day is Friday. Mother has completed three dresses, done the washing and ironing, also the housework. Has my little daughter cooked a meal or even washed the dishes this week?”

“O, well, other girls don’t have to cook and wash dishes. There is Betty Jones, Jessie Miller and Tutie Smith; they don’t have to do such work. They laugh at me when I tell them I had to wash the dishes.”

“Remember, my dear, those girls you speak of are daughters of wealthy parents. Your mother is a poor widow.”

Elsie’s heart was hard, and nothing her mother could say had any effect upon the child. She would sit and read her book until her eyes became so heavy she could no longer see. Then she would retire while her weary mother would wash the supper dishes—often after ten o’clock at night, for

she was obliged to sew until the garment she was working on was finished.

Mrs. Graham's strength soon gave away and she lay prostrated in bed. Elsie managed to get herself a little bite to eat. Her mother had no appetite so she would not bother to get her anything. She must hurry up and get off to school. She would place her mother's medicine on a little stand at the head of her bed, with a pitcher of water. Her mother could wait on herself. There was no need of her staying out of school to give a little bit of medicine. She had half washed her dishes and dressed for school; but what was she to do about fastening her clothes and combing her hair. O, mother could sit up in the bed and comb her hair and fasten her clothes. She was not so sick that that would hurt her. So her mother had her clothes to fasten and her hair to comb when she herself was so sick she could hardly raise her head from the pillow.

"Elsie, dear, won't you stay with mother, to-day? I am very sick and I shall be all alone when you are gone."

"Oh! that is always the way. You never want me to go to school. You don't care if I grow up to be an idiot. You know I will lose my seat if I stay at home; I would never get an education if I listened to you. I don't want to stay home, I'll lose my place in the class. I have fixed your medicine and water so you can get them if you need them. There is no use of me staying home, there is nothing for me to do."

Then Elsie began crying. Her mother seeing how badly she felt told her to hurry off to school or she would be late. That day a picnic was planned by the girls of Elsie's grade. Of course Elsie had to go. She was the one to suggest the picnic so she remained after school to talk the matter over with the girls. She had forgotten about her poor sick mother at home, who had not eaten a morsel of food

all day. It was dark when she returned home. Her mother said:

"Elsie, dear, what has kept you out so late, to-night?"

"O, we girls are planning for a picnic. I knew you would not care if I stayed, for I was with a good crowd of girls, and they want me to go with them to a picnic on Saturday. Can I go?"

"Would you, my dear Elsie, leave your poor sick mother here alone and go off to a picnic?"

"I can't do you any good if I should stay, and you will be better by that time. I have promised to go and I must not disappoint them."

In the morning, when Elsie had a little work to do she would worry her mother almost to death, with the fear that she would be late to school. She cried all the time she was doing the work, or getting ready.

"Now I will have to run all the way to school to keep from being late. You always keep me home until the last minute." Then she would commence crying so loudly that the neighbors could hear her.

"My child, do not worry me any more this morning, I am so nervous I cannot lie still if you don't stop your crying." Then Elsie would grab her bonnet and cape and start off to school in a run, with her eyes all red and swollen.

Poor Mrs. Graham would lie and cry and wonder if Elsie would ever change, or would always be the same hard-hearted, disobedient child. How she prayed each day and night for her Heavenly Father to protect Elsie and give her such divine wisdom, knowledge and strength as none but He could give, and make her obedient and kind to those around her.

Elsie was of a nervous disposition nor would she try to control her nerves. She finally became so impudent and unkind to every one around her that no one cared for her. Her poor sick mother, with tears in her eyes, would beg

Elsie to be more kind, and not to be so saucy to those around her, or she would soon have no friends.

Elsie would say:

"What do I care whether anyone likes me or not? I don't owe them anything. They don't have me to support. I'll be glad when I am eighteen, I'll do as I like, and go where I please. I wish I were eighteen now." Mrs. Graham would answer:

"My dear daughter, what would become of you if I should be taken from you? You would have no one to care for you, you are so cross and unkind to everyone that no one would do anything for you if I were gone."

"I'll do for myself, I can make sixty dollars a month teaching school."

"But remember, dear, it will be a long time yet before you will graduate. If I should be taken from you, how would you get your education?"

"O, I'd work for my board, and go to school."

"You will have to change your ways, my dear, or no one will keep you long. You will not have mother there to forgive and forget your wrong doings. There is no one like a mother, my dear child, and when you lose your mother, you lose the best friend you have."

Elsie would turn aside, curl up her nose and smile, as much to say, "I'll get along all right. Don't you worry about me."

Mrs. Graham grew so weak that she could do nothing for Elsie but to pray for her that she might see her folly before it was too late, and that the dear Lord might keep her a pure innocent girl and woman in His sight. Kind neighbors and friends came and did all they could for Mrs. Graham; but she was past earthly help. She had overtaxed her strength by working so hard, and the strain she had been laboring under for years past proved too much for her delicate health. She lay pale and weak on her pillow.

Elsie returned home from school as usual in a very bad temper. The teacher had given her a check for misconduct that she did not deserve, as some of the other girls were the mischief makers. Elsie was innocent this time; but she had deceived her teacher so many times that she had lost confidence in the girl and did not believe she was innocent, when she told the truth. This made Elsie very angry even at her poor sick mother. Had she been in good humor, she would have noticed that her mother was much paler and weaker than usual. She went to her mother's room to tell her her troubles.

"My dear daughter, I am very sorry for you; but put your trust in God and be brave. Take your punishment rather than to deceive anyone. Be kind to those around you, and may God bless you. Will you get me a glass of water, my dear?"

Elsie pouted and said: "Why can't Mrs. Williams bring you some water? What is she here for if not to wait on you and do the little housework?"

Elsie brought her mother the water but did not do it willingly. Little did Elsie think that would be the last glass of water she would ever hand her poor mother. She left her mother's room, went to the kitchen and pouted a while at Mrs. Williams, ate her supper, then retired for the night without seeing her mother again.

She was awakened about three o'clock in the morning by a frightful dream. She could not at first tell where she was. In her dream she saw her mother in a white robe, lying in a long black coffin. Her mother looked so beautiful, but so white. She touched her face. She was cold as ice. She lifted her hand, it was cold and stiff. Her mother was dead! She gave a wild scream and it awoke her from her sleep. When she was wide awake, these words came into her mind: "Will not my daughter bring a glass of water to her poor sick mother?"

These words she had read at school dozens of times. Why did they rush into her mind now just when she had had such a bad dream? She consoled herself with the thought that her mother was not dead. She had only been dreaming. Did she not get her mother the water she had asked for? Yes, but she did not do it willingly. Then she remembered how pale her mother looked as she said: "God bless you my child—trust Him."

For the first time Elsie's hard heart was softened. She resolved to be better to her mother, as the picture of her mother in the casket came before her eyes.

She arose, dressed herself, and stole softly down stairs into her mother's room. The curtains were down and everything was so quiet in the room, her mother must be sleeping. She would not wake her to ask forgiveness but wait until morning. She went to her room, lay down on the bed, and soon fell asleep, but awoke with the same dream she had before. This time the light was shining in at the window. She crept softly down stairs again hoping this time her mother would be awake. Then she would ask her forgiveness and tell her how sorry she was for being so unkind to her while she had been sick, and for being unwilling to give her the glass of water.

When she reached her mother's door, the curtains were up and the light streaming in at the window showed that the bed had been removed from the room. What had they done with her mother? She went through the house. There was no one whom she could ask about her mother; she went through the house again and out to the front steps. She sat down and began to cry; presently Mrs. Williams came to her, Elsie threw her arms around her neck and begged her to tell where her mother was.

"Be quiet, my child, you have no mother, now. Her spirit left us before eleven o'clock last night. Her form lies at the undertaker's parlor robed for the grave."

Elsie commenced crying and screamed: "O, my dear mother, what shall I do without you!"

Mrs. Williams said, "My dear child, compose yourself and let me get you some breakfast."

Elsie was not hungry. She could not eat anything. Mrs. Williams tidied the house, then she went with Elsie to the undertaker's parlor where her angel mother lay. Elsie could hardly realize it was her own dear mother lying there, she was so beautiful. She looked the same as Elsie had seen her in her dream during the night.

"O, mother, dear mother, won't you speak to me? won't you say you forgive your Elsie for being so unkind to you? My mother, my mother!"

Mrs. Graham's form lay cold and still in her casket. If Elsie had only been kind to her poor mother a few hours or days before how different she would have felt at that moment. But her mother was gone to the realms above. Elsie could never hear her mother say again: "Elsie, dear, I forgive you," or "Elsie, dear, get mother a drink of water."

Mrs. Williams accompanied the poor girl to her lonely home. When they entered her mother's room Elsie gave one scream and fainted.

On Mrs. Graham's table lay a note for Elsie and when the girl recovered, Mrs. Williams gave it to her and told her of her mother's death. Mrs. Graham did not realize until almost the last minute that she was going to die; then fearing to excite her child she would not allow her to be awakened but wrote a brief note of farewell. The note read:

"Dear Elsie—

"Mother is fast going from you to the realms above. Will you, dear Elsie, be a Christian and meet mother there? Mother forgives you for being unkind to her.

She loved you to the last. Be truthful and kind to those around you. Mother has lots she would like to say to you; but her hand can no longer hold the pen. Let me say, dear Elsie, be a soldier and servant of the Lord. Always remember me as your loving mother.

“Your Mother’s Legacy.”

After the funeral was over and Elsie had seen her mother’s form lowered from her sight forever, Mrs. Williams took Elsie home with her for a few days until some different arrangement could be made for her. It was her mother’s last request that Elsie should be placed in a Christian home. The girl was no longer the hard-hearted independent Elsie she once had been. She was as gentle and kind as a dove. Death had robbed her of her dearest friend—her mother. She would now have to be reconciled to her lot and be contented in whatever home Mrs. Williams saw fit to place her. She had no longer the desire for an education and a teacher’s position with a sixty-dollar salary. If she could only have her own dear mother back in their little home again how happy she would be! But that could never be. The only thing she could do, then, was to be good and prepare to meet her mother in heaven where all is bright and beautiful.

Mrs. Graham had laid aside two hundred dollars of hard-earned money to help Elsie to graduate. This had to go for the doctor’s bill and funeral expenses so there was nothing left for Elsie but a few household goods. Elsie insisted on keeping her mother’s machine as her poor mother had made a living for the two since Elsie was three years old with this same machine. Elsie was allowed to keep some of her mother’s things which she prized the highest. The rest of the household goods were sold for Elsie’s benefit.

Mrs. Williams was the best friend Elsie had, for she had loved Mrs. Graham. Elsie was so disagreeable to her poor mother and those around her, that Mrs. Williams cared but little for her, only on her mother's account. When she saw the change in Elsie she began to love her also, for Elsie was a lovable child if she only chose to make herself so.

Mrs. Williams was not able to give Elsie a home herself but did the best she could for her. She placed her in first one home then another; but the people were unkind to her and made her work very hard so that she had but little time for her school. They would keep her until the last minute then Elsie would be late for school. She could not cry and fret as she had done when her mother was living, but had to make the best of it. Her teacher complained of her being late for school, also of the days she was absent. When Elsie told her teacher she had to work very hard and the people she was staying with were unkind to her, her teacher sent a note to Mrs. Williams requesting her to look after Elsie, as she was getting behind in her studies. Mrs. Williams at last was fortunate in finding Elsie a good home with Christian people who were kind to her. They were not like her own dear mother, however, and Elsie learned to see the difference between her own mother's care and the care of those who now had her in charge.

A number of years have passed since Elsie's mother's death. The change which came over Elsie then has won many friends for her. Had she stayed the hard-hearted, saucy Elsie she was then she would have had a more difficult task in obtaining an education than she did. Elsie is a teacher, now, in the high school; but she has never forgotten how unkind she was to her poor sick mother. She would give worlds, were they hers to give,

if she could only hear her mother say, "Elsie, I forgive you," instead of reading it from the little slip of paper, her mother's legacy.

Little girls, little boys, all who read this story, let the writer say to you:

"Love your mother and be kind to her, for you, like Elsie, may not always have a mother to love."

THE END.



Where There's a Will  
There's a Way



# Where There's a Will There's a Way

Eveline White and her mother lived in a neat little cottage on Fourteenth street in the town of L\_\_\_\_\_. Eveline's father had been brought home dead when she was only eight years old.

Mr. White was a railroad man and was killed in an accident. He was poor but each month when he received his salary he deposited ten dollars in the bank. He often laughed and told his wife he had put that aside for a rainy day. The rainy day had come, and Mrs. White, and her two little ones were left alone.

After Mr. White had been laid to rest there was only a small sum left of what Mr. White had called their rainy day money and Mrs. White was obliged to seek employment for the support of herself and the two children. What was she to do? She had never earned a dollar in her life; but she thought:

"Where there's a will there's a way," and the dear Lord helps those who help themselves.

She left Eveline with her baby brother three years old, asking God to help her in finding employment and to protect her little ones while she was gone. With a heavy heart she left her home, hardly knowing where to go in search of work. She must try to get a position at some kind of sewing at which she was always handy although not a dressmaker. She called at one dressmaking shop after another. The tale was the same everywhere; they all had what help they needed and she must serve an apprenticeship of six months in order to get a position at dressmaking. Then she tried the tailor shops, but without success. She was walking up Broadway, almost

discouraged, when her eyes caught a printed sign in a tailor's window:

“Wanted—A good woman to assist in sewing.”

She opened the door and walked in.

“I see you have a sign out wanting help.”

“Yes, ma'am, do you understand the tailor's trade?”

“No, sir, although I am very handy with a needle.”

The tailor scratched his head for a moment and stood in a deep study.

“I have never hired help unless they understand the trade. Would you like to serve an apprenticeship of six months? Is it convenient for you to do so?”

For the first time since the conversation began he observed that she was in deep mourning.

“I judge you are a widow.”

“Yes, sir,” she said, “my husband has been dead only two weeks and I have two small children to support.”

“I do not usually give wages to an apprentice; but I need help and I will tell you what I'll do. I'll give you ten dollars a month while you are learning the trade; after you serve your apprenticeship, I will give you steady employment as long as you care to remain with me. Of course ten dollars may seem a small sum to you; but it will help you to pay your rent, and at any time should you have to work over hours, I will pay you ten cents an hour for your work.”

Mrs. White told him she did not know what she could do with her children while she was away from home; but she would see what arrangements she could make about them and she would let him know the next day, if that would be satisfactory to him. He said that it would.

Mrs. White was in a deep study all the way home, whether to accept the position or not. She had some money in the bank yet, enough if she economized very closely, to live on during the six months. Then she

would have steady employment all the time. Her rent was eight dollars a month. The ten dollars would little more than pay her rent; but she would not need all the five rooms the house contained. The two front rooms she might rent for ten dollars a month furnished. That would pay her rent. She would get along nicely if she could carry out that plan. She would get a girl to stay with her little ones during the day.

When she arrived home she found the children all right. Eveline had taken good care of little Arthur. She gave him a little lunch at noon and put him to bed. While he was asleep Eveline busied herself in preparing her mother's dinner to surprise her on her return home. The table was spread with a clean linen cloth and everything was in readiness. Mrs. White never dreamed that her daughter was such a nice little housekeeper.

When Eveline kissed her mother goodnight and was about to retire to bed, Mrs. White took the child in her arms, pressed her to her bosom and said:

"My darling child, you do not know how happy mama feels to think you have been such a good little girl today, and have been so kind to little Arthur."

The tears came to Eveline's eyes as her mother praised her for her goodness. She said:

"My dear mama, you know I must take your place and take care of little brother and keep the house clean while you take dear papa's place, and make the living for we have no papa now."

Mrs. White turned aside to hide the tears which were fast falling down her cheeks, while Eveline cried herself to sleep in sympathy.

Mrs. White accepted the position at Mr. Simon's and was fortunate enough to rent her rooms to a good woman who would look after Eveline and Arthur while Mrs. White was away from home.

It had been Mrs. White's intention to hire a girl to look after her little ones, but Eveline insisted on taking care of Arthur herself. She could look after him as well as any one could. Mrs. White knew she would be a kind little mother, and allowed her to do so in order to please her, and make her feel that she was helping her mother. It was Eveline's vacation. Her school would not begin for a couple of months; she could save her mama at least twelve or fifteen dollars during those two months by doing the housework and taking care of Arthur. Young as she was, she was a very sensible child and realized her mother would have a hard time to support them and she would do all she could to lighten her poor mother's burden.

Five years have passed since the commencement of our story. Mrs. White is still working at tailor Simon's shop. Eveline has grown up to be quite a little woman and capable housekeeper, keeping house and looking after Arthur, though this was not all the work she did. She was preparing herself to be a teacher, for she could see her mother's health was failing and she knew her mother would not always be able to care for them. She must get an education so she could be the burden bearer and let her mother have a rest.

Eveline was not what you would call a pretty girl, but she had a lovable disposition and was kind and good to all around her so that everyone who knew her, old or young, loved her. When she would hear other girls talking saucily to their mothers, she would say to them:

"How can you talk so unkind to your mother; you will not always have a mother. I love my mama and could not talk to her that way."

Then she would tell them some little story that would impress on their minds the lesson that they must be kind to their mother.

If any of the neighbors' children were in trouble they would find Eveline and confide in her for they knew that in some way Eveline would help them out.

Many a surprise did Eveline plan for some poor, lonely, old woman—of a nice basket of fruit and flowers that grew in their own yard. Often Eveline's mother would fit her up a nice little basket of groceries and goodies for her to take to some lone widow with little children poorer than themselves.

Such was the life they lived for years.

Mrs. White had to work early and late, and after working hours at the shop she had her own sewing and mending to do—work in which Eveline would help after the house was tidy—of an evening.

In spite of all she had to do Eveline was never late at school and always had a perfect lesson. Her teacher loved her because she was so kind and truthful.

Mrs. White was taken suddenly ill one day and was brought home from the shop. For weeks she was confined to her bed. "From overwork," the doctor said.

Mrs. White engaged a woman to do her work and take care of her, so as not to keep Eveline from school as she was getting along so nicely in her studies. Eveline's hours out of school were always spent at her mother's bedside. Her mother did not want for anything when Eveline was at home.

The girl will never forget one evening. After school several of the girls came to her asking her to remain a little while at the school house; for they were planning for a surprise birthday party for one of the girls on Friday night, and they wanted Eveline to help them plan for the social.

"I am sorry, girls," said Eveline, "that I cannot remain with you. My mother is sick and she would be

uneasy about me if I were late in getting home, and then she needs me to help take care of her."

"Oh, we will only be a little while planning for the party," said one of the girls.

"Make your mother believe you were kept in at school," said another. "I often do that when I am late getting home. Your mother will never know the difference."

"I would not do that, no, not for the world. I could not deceive my mother in that way. If my mother should find it out she would lose confidence in me. I must go. Goodnight, girls, I hope you'll succeed in planning for your social."

The girls did not get angry with Eveline; but thought she was the best girl they had ever known and they all loved her.

When Eveline returned home that evening she found her poor mother much worse. The doctor said it was the effects of the warm day. Eveline's mother had been watching the hands on the clock for Eveline's return. She knew she would feel better when Eveline came home, for she was such a comfort to her.

When the cool shadows of the evening came on Mrs. White seemed a little better and rested quite easy during the night. Eveline did not go to school the next day, but remained at her mother's bedside all day, and for days after.

Eveline was missed at school. The doctor said that it was the good nursing Mrs. White had that restored her so soon to health, and Eveline's hard study at school soon brought her up with the rest of her class.

When Eveline told her mother about the party her mother insisted that Eveline should go with the girls as she had been a faithful little daughter and nurse to her. Eveline said:

"Mama, dear, do you think I could go to the party and enjoy myself when I know how sick you are? No, I would not enjoy myself if I went. I would prefer to stay with you, mother dear." And Eveline was allowed to have her own way.

Before Eveline was seventeen years old she graduated from the public school. Eveline was quite surprised one morning at the breakfast table as she turned over her plate. There lay a bank note addressed to Miss Eveline White. It was enough to buy her what clothes and books she would need for the State Normal, also to pay her tuition for one term at the school. This was the grandest birthday present Eveline had ever received. She had almost forgotten it was her seventeenth birthday. She rose from her chair, threw her arms around her mother and kissed her.

"Mother, dear, I do not know how to thank you enough for this check; you are the kindest and dearest mother on earth."

"Mother thinks she has got the dearest and kindest daughter on earth. God bless you, my dear child," answered the mother as she patted Eveline on the cheek.

Arthur also had a little present for Eveline that he had earned himself by doing errands at one of the stores near their home. He had earned ten dollars. Five, he said, was for his mother and five for Eveline.

"But where is Arthur's share coming from?" asked Eveline.

"O, I don't need anything," said Arthur. "Mr. Goodman, the grocer, has promised me work in the store during my vacation. He will give me twenty dollars a month. I will have more than enough to buy my clothes and books for the next term of school."

This was quite a surprise to Mrs. White and Eveline for they had never dreamed of Arthur thinking of getting a

position—a mere boy like him getting a salary of twenty dollars a month.

"How did it happen, my son, that you got such a good position?"

"It was this way, mother: You see I have been doing errands for Mr. Goodman for some time to earn that ten dollars. Mr. Goodman wanted a good honest boy to help him for a couple of months during the summer. He asked me if I knew where he could get a boy of that kind. I wanted the position, but I was afraid to say a word. I knew, mother, you had always taught me to be honest and truthful, and I knew I was worthy of the position. I told Mr. Goodman I did not know where he could find a boy of that kind, and he said:

"'Arthur, I have had my eye on you for some time. Would you like to have the position?'"

"I was too overjoyed to speak for a moment, then he said, 'Ask your mother, my boy, if she will let you accept the position at twenty dollars per month?'

"Now, by dear mother, I am waiting for your answer, whether to accept the position or decline it. It will be just as you say, darling mother, although I would like to accept the position."

"God bless you, my boy, and may you prove faithful in Mr. Goodman's service."

Eveline is now teaching school at a fair salary. Arthur is bookkeeper in Mr. Goodman's store. Mrs. White no longer has to work at the tailor shop, but keeps house for her two children. She is proud to think that she has such a noble daughter and son. The children have bought the little cottage and lot where most of their childhood days were passed, and deeded it to their mother. As Mrs. White sees her children going to and from their work she thinks of their father how proud he would be of his children if

he could see them now grown into manhood and womanhood.

Mrs. White has learned from experience that "Where there's a will, there's a way," and her children have always kept their mother's motto in their minds.

Now, my dear little readers, you have no doubt read the story of Elsie Graham. Which would you prefer to be like, Elsie Graham or Eveline White?

THE END



A Good Beginning, but a  
Sad Ending



# A Good Beginning, but a Sad Ending

It was Christmas morning. The snow lay white and glistening on the ground. Two boys with their guns started out for a few hours hunting in the hills.

"Now is a good time, Bob, to catch squirrels," said one of the boys.

"You just bet it is," said the other. "This is a good time to chase the deer. You can track them in the snow."

"I am bound to have a deer," said Billy. "I'll make father proud of me and he'll not be sorry be got me this gun, either."

"Did your father buy your gun?" asked Bob. "My father did not buy me anything."

"Where did you get your gun then?"

"Why, I wrote a note months ago to Santa Claus and his good wife and told them to be sure not to forget me. I wanted a real shotgun, oh, so bad, and I would be such a good boy if he would only bring me one. Sure enough, Billy, he did not forget my note and I am going to be one of the best boys you ever saw this coming year, and maybe Santa Claus will bring me an automobile next year."

"Bosh! do you believe all that stuff about Santa Claus? Well, I don't, you can just bet your sweet life, I am too old for Santa now. Father is good enough for me," he said, with a sneer. "They can't stuff me with such baby nonsense any more."

Billy was three years the senior of his companion, and although only thirteen years old he thought himself quite a man.

"Say, Bob, let's go and show our guns to Tom Jones. Maybe he would like to go gunning with us."

"Say, do you think Tom got a gun for Christmas?"

"No, I don't think so. Tom told me he wanted a gun for Christmas. Well, I want lots of things I don't get and I am sure his father is too poor to buy him a gun. Then he's tied to his mama's apron string. She won't let him go."

"Now, Billy, don't say one word about Tom. Tom's a first-rate fellow, I'll tell you what he did last night. You know the old widow Brown, who lives down on the flat; well, she has got a house full of little children and she is awful poor so she can hardly feed them all. Well, Tom's been saving up his small change for months past to buy each one of those little children a present for Christmas. He told me himself that he knew Santa Claus would not visit them this year for he did not visit them last year and they are lots poorer now than they were then. Now look here, Billy, Tom believes in Santa Claus."

"Bosh! He is only trying to stuff you."

"Tom is a good fellow and I believe him before I would you, for I never knew Tom to tell a lie. His teacher says he is the best boy in her room and she ought to know. Tom is honest. He won't lie or steal like we boys do, 'cause he says it's wicked to steal and lie, and I think so too. Tom is a good mama's boy; he goes to Sunday School. I go to Sunday School, too."

"No one goes to Sunday School but girls and fools. I'm too smart to go to Sunday School."

"Say, Billy, if you should die you would go to hell, sure. My Sunday School teacher says so, and she knows. You just bet she does."

"Well I'll go to hell then, I don't care how soon; but I'm going to take my gun along and shoot squirrels there."

"You don't know what you are talking about. There are no squirrels in hell, only a big hot fire there to burn bad people forever."

"Then heaven, I suppose, is a place for your nicey, nice people?"

"Heaven is the place for good people, so my Sunday School teacher says, and I am sure Tom Jones would go there if he should die tonight, for he is the best boy in town. Everyone says so."

"Well, I don't say so; but if I go to hell, I will kill the devil with my shotgun. Say, Bob, you didn't tell me what Tom did for the widow Brown."

"Oh, yes! Tom saved five dollars. His father told him he could do as he pleased with the money for he had earned it all himself. Well, now there is a wheel down at the pawnshop to be sold for five dollars. Tom wants a wheel awful bad. You know he is the only boy in my room at school who has no wheel. Tom told us last week what he was going to do with his money and all us boys begged him to buy the wheel; but he said he must get Christmas presents with the money for the widow and her children. Last night he took a crowd of us boys down town to help him get the things for them, and I'll be switched if he didn't have every one of their names down on a piece of paper, even to the baby two years old. He took her a two-bit doll. Then he had a couple of dollars left and he bought groceries with the last cent of it counting in a little treat for the children, for they never get anything like that. Last Christmas they didn't even get an apple. Then Tom invited all of us boys to go with him to carry the presents down to the widow's house. Tom planned to go to the door quiet and put the things on the steps, ring the bell, then run away and not let her know who brought them; but you know the snow around the widow's cottage is a little deep and we could not get out of her way although we tried to. Well, the widow called us back and she was so surprised as well as delighted to see that big basket filled up to the top. I tell you it made her smile when she saw that big fat hen all ready for the oven, Tom's mother sent her. When she asked who presented the things, Tom says:

"Mother sent the hen and we boys brought the other things."

"Tom didn't want all the praise, although he deserved it. He wanted us boys to share his pleasure. It made us fellows feel pretty sneaky when Tom said that, for we all had our Christmas money in our pockets and Tom didn't have a nickel."

"Well, the widow invited us boys in to help take the things out of the basket. I tell you, you never saw such a happy family in your life as they were. Even the dear little baby hugged her dollie in her arms and screamed with delight over it. Tom burst out crying to see that baby so happy over her dollie. I really believe it did Tom more good then if he had bought the wheel with the money to see that baby so happy. She would not let anyone touch her dollie, fearing they would spoil its pretty clothes. Tom's the best fellow I ever knew."

"I tell you he is the biggest fool I know of. If I had been he I would have bought that wheel. It will be a long time before he gets another five dollars, I bet you."

"Now, Tom won't lose anything, Billy, by doing good, for my mother says so. I'll tell you now what we boys have done. We bought that wheel for Tom. I'll tell you how we did it. We four boys who went with Tom had half enough money in our pockets to buy that wheel. Then I thought last night after I left Tom that I would go and see his Sunday School teacher and maybe she would help us out. She and I called on several of the boys in the class and, by jinks! we got enough money to buy that wheel and the teacher and I, for I am in Tom's class, went down this morning and bought the wheel, and she has put a card on it saying: 'From your Sunday School class,' and we are going to take the wheel down tonight, leave it at the door, ring the bell and run away like we did last night."

"Golly! won't Tom be tickled over it?" said Billy.

"You just bet he will," said Bob.

"That is not all the poor widow Brown got through Tom's kindness.

"Of course we had to tell the story about Tom and his presents to the poor woman so the parents of the boys in our class are going to send the widow a ton of coal, a lot of groceries, and clothes, today. So you see they would not have done that if it had not been for Tom's presents, because they never gave her anything last Christmas, though her husband died just before Christmas and everyone knew they were poor."

"It seems to me, you, not Tom, were the cause of the widow getting the ton of coal and the groceries."

"Why so?"

"Oh, because if you had not tried to get Tom that wheel and called on all those boys and told about Tom's goodness, she would never have got the ton of coal or the groceries today."

"Oh, I had not thought of that."

"Don't give Tom all the praise and yourself none as Tom did when he took the presents to the widow."

"Yes, it was all Tom's doings, for I would never have thought of trying to get him a wheel if Tom hadn't made the sacrifice first, and was not willing to receive his share of the praise. Tom can't use his wheel now; but it won't be winter always."

"Well, here is Tom at the gate with a new gun. Halloo, Tom! Merry Christmas to you!"

"Same to you, boys," said the sweet voice of Tom. "Out trying your guns?"

"Yes, and we came to see if you don't want to go with us up into the hills hunting."

"I don't think mother will let me go," said Tom. "She will be afraid for me to go out with you. She said I must

never go out hunting with anyone but father and we are going tomorrow."

"Oh, pshaw! Come go with us now. Ask your mother if you can go," said Bob.

"Coax her to let you go. Ask your father if you can go," said Billy. "If he bought the gun for you, he'll let you go, I know."

"But I would not go unless my mother is willing. Mother knows what is best for me to do."

Tom's father persuaded the mother to let Tom go with the boys. He said it would be all right for him to go out for a few hours. Tom had never been allowed the freedom which other boys had and he was old enough to go out and try his gun for a little while as a treat on Christmas day. So Tom's mother consented for him to go. He promised to be home in time to help eat their Christmas turkey.

"Don't forget the dinner hour," said Mrs. Jones as she kissed her boy goodbye and wished him much success in hunting on that Christmas day.

Tom shouldered his gun and started off, and I am sure he felt as happy over his gun and the few hours he was going to spend hunting as the little girl was over her dollie.

The sun was shining bright and warm on the glittering snow and the boys trudged along until they reached the tall pines where the squirrels live and the snowbirds twittered from tree to tree. The boys had their sacks full of wild game they had killed. Then Tom suggested that it was high time for them to return home, for he knew his mother's dinner was almost ready and he was getting hungry; but Billy insisted on killing a few more squirrels before he returned.

"But mother will expect me by three o'clock," said Tom, "I must not disappoint her or she will lose confidence in me."

"Oh, well," said Billy, "that won't kill her if you do disappoint her once. I never go home when I tell my mother I will. I go when I get ready."

"I would not treat my poor mother that way, no, not for the world. I do not remember ever disappointing my mother. She sets the time for me to return home; so if you are going to stay longer, I am going home, and I say, Bob, you can stay with Billy, for I shall hurry home."

"You go on and we will catch up with you in a few moments; but don't lose your trail for you are not so well acquainted with the mountains as Billy is and I am."

"No, he is not so well acquainted with these mountains for he has always been tied to mama's apron string," ejaculated Billy.

"Well, I wish I was tied to mama's apron string now till I get my share of the turkey," laughed Tom, "and I'll tell you, boys, she is the best mother ever lived," said Tom. "Goodbye, hope you'll catch up with me."

"Steer to the left and be sure you don't get off your trail," hollered Bob, and they parted. Billy and Bob started in a different direction, as they saw a large gray squirrel run up a tall pine.

"I tell you that's my squirrel," said Billy, and off went his gun. At the second report of the gun, the squirrel fell to the ground. Billy picked him up, crowded him down into his hunting sack and started off after another one.

It had been a couple of hours since Tom had left the boys, yet Billy had no thought of going home. Bob, however, was getting hungry and tired and wanted to go home.

"Let's get just one more squirrel, Bob, then we'll go."

"I wish I had gone home with Tom," said Bob, half whining.

"Don't be a baby, we'll start home in a few minutes. It won't take us long to go. We'll take the trail over the hill. Tom won't get there much ahead of us because he doesn't know the trail."

"I know he is home eating his turkey now, and I wish I had a piece of my turkey and pumpkin pie," whined Bob.

"Well, cry-baby, come, let's go home." And they started down the mountain trail.

It was nearly dark and they heard a rattling in the bushes at the left. Billy whispered:

"Keep quiet, it's a deer, I guess."

So they pushed their way quietly through the brush on their hands and knees until they were within shooting distance of the supposed deer when Billy fired. At the report of the gun came a faint scream and the boys recognized the voice.

"By Joe! I believe that's Tom's voice," said Billy, and called out:

"Tom, is that you?" but no reply came.

They hurried to the bushes whence the sound came. As they reached the spot they heard Tom say in a faint voice: "Tell mother."

The boys broke through the bushes where he was lying. They raised his head; but he could not speak. The blood was pouring from the wound in his side. The shot from Billy's gun had penetrated Tom's side near the heart.

"Oh, Billy!" said Bob, "you have killed Tom. Poor Tom, what shall we do?"

"I will stay with him while you go for help," said Billy. "Be quick, Bob. Oh, poor Tom!" he sighed, "will you forgive me? I did not know it was you." Tom raised his hand and his white lips parted; but only a faint sound came from them. Bob bent low and caught the sound. "I forgive—" and the words died on his lips.

"He forgives you, Billy."

"Hurry, I say, Bob. Go for help quick; maybe he has only fainted. We may save him yet."

Bob started off as fast as his legs could carry him. It was dark and he had quite a way to go for help. He stopped at the first house he came to and told his story. A horse was soon saddled and a man was on his way to town

for a physician and to break the sad news to the parents who were anxiously waiting their son's return.

"I fear something has happened to my poor boy," said the mother.

"Don't fear, wife," said the father, "Tom will come home all right. He is only having a good time with the boys and has forgotten himself."

"But that is not like my Tom. He never forgets what I say to him no matter how good a time he is having."

Just then a rap was heard on the door. When the door was opened for Tom, as they supposed, a stranger stepped in.

"I have come to you with sad news. Your son has been shot. We cannot tell whether he is dead or alive. We will bring him home as soon as possible. A wagon has been sent for him."

Bob returned with the wagon as he knew exactly where the accident happened. When they reached the spot the moon was shining bright and stretched out on the frozen ground lay two forms still and motionless, instead of one. Billy was dead. The fright of being alone with the dead affected his weak heart, was supposed to be the cause of his collapse. Tom and Billy were taken to their sad homes. About the time Tom's body arrived at his home his wheel came also, for the boys had not heard of Tom's sad fate and thought they would surprise him with the wheel.

Poor Tom would never need a wheel again. His spirit was in heaven. He finished his mission on earth the night before and God had taken him for a higher and better purpose—a work he could not accomplish here on earth.

A few days later the snow was shoveled away and two little mounds of earth were thrown open, side by side. As the two little white hearses wound their way, followed by a long line of black carriages, there was not a dry eye in the procession, for the story of Tom's Christmas presents

had been told from one to another. As Bob stood by the little mound of earth and saw Tom's body lowered to its last resting place, the words he had said the day before to Billy flashed into his mind:

"If Tom should die tonight I am sure he would go to heaven."

Little did he think then that Tom would be there before night; but Tom's spirit, I am sure, is saved.

One thing would always be a mystery to Bob, that was how Tom ever got where they found him when they thought him home eating his Christmas turkey. It was supposed by everyone that Tom lost his way and wandered around until he found that trail. Perhaps going down the trail he had slipped and fallen as his ankle was sprained and several bruises were found on his body.

Tom did not forget his mother even to the last. He almost expired with her name on his lips. It was supposed he was going to say:

"Tell mother I got lost."

For years afterwards could be seen a wheel standing in one corner of Tom Jones's room bearing a card on it, yellowed by time and dust, with these words written on it:

"Merry Christmas to Tom Jones, from his Sunday School class. Whatsoever thou givest to the poor, the Lord giveth back to thee." And many a night did a feeble gray-haired father and mother kneel by that wheel and thank God through their tears that He had taken their son, yet He had brought them to know the Savior and to say:

"Not my will but thine be done."

THE END.

# On the Arkansas Plains



## On the Arkansas Plains

It was a cold, bleak day in the middle of December. The wind blew as if it would sweep away every house on the plains of Arkansas. It was near four o'clock in the afternoon when a carriage halted at a little farmhouse. The occupants of the carriage asked permission of the farmer to remain with his family during the night as it was several miles to the town for which they had started.

"Our accommodations are not very good," said the farmer, "but if you can put up with them, you are welcome to stay."

"Thank you, sir," said the stranger, and he assisted a woman with an infant in her arms to alight from the carriage.

They were shown into the house where there was a blazing fire in the grate and the good housewife was preparing her evening meal of potatoes, pork and cornbread. The strangers ate with a relish, as if they had not tasted food for twenty-four hours.

A pleasant evening was spent with the family, then the strangers retired for the night.

The next morning, after they had eaten their breakfast, the lady asked the farmer's wife if she would take care of her baby while they drove to a little town eight miles distant to transact some business. She said they would be gone only a few hours; but the morning air was very cold to take the little one out after such a long cold drive the day before.

Mrs. Kellie thought it was a very cold morning for a baby of five weeks, so she gladly consented to take care of the infant for a few hours.

The door of the room where the lady was putting on her wraps stood a little ajar. Mrs. Kellie noticed the mother taking the infant in her arms several times, kissing it and crying. She thought to herself that when the lady was the

mother of eight children like herself she would be glad to be relieved of the baby for a few hours.

The lady bade her goodbye, telling her to take good care of her little one until she returned. The carriage drove up to the door. The lady was assisted into it and they drove away never to be seen again by the farmer and his good wife.

The few hours ran into days and still the parents never returned to claim their infant girl. Mr. Kellie was a poor farmer and the past year had been a dry one. He had barely raised enough on his small farm to support his own family by the close economy of his good wife, so he did not feel able to take another one into the family. He notified the officers of the little town near by; but though they made every effort, they could find no trace of the parents of the infant.

What was to be done with the baby? Mrs. Kellie with her eight children would have loved to keep this little cast-away in her own home had she been able to do so; but she realized that they had a hard time to support their own family, and consented to give the infant into the hand of the officers to find a home for her. A middle-aged lady consented to adopt the baby, as she had no children of her own.

So the little waif was taken into a good comfortable home and reared until she was five years old. Then Elaine's adopted mother died and she was taken from place to place until she was ten years old. Sometimes she received good care and other times the people she lived with were very unkind to her. She was finally adopted by a lady by the name of Mrs. Gray, who kept boarders, and little Elaine had to work very hard for her living. Sometimes Mrs. Gray would get angry at Elaine because she had not done her work just right and would beat her almost to death.

Elaine stood her cruel treatment for a couple of years and then she concluded to run away. So one bright moonlight

night she tied up a few of her best clothes in a little bundle and started out to tramp, as she had seen boys do for their living. But tramping was not so pleasant as she had thought it would be. After walking for days without much to eat she became very weary, footsore and discouraged. She had no home to go to and did not know what to do. She was picked up unconscious in the street one day by the Captain of a Salvation Army Corps who took her to the quarters and cared for her.

She became an active worker in the Army and was the means of leading many little girls and boys to Christ by the story of her own hard life and what had been done for her.

When she was eighteen she married Lieutenant Noels of the Army who died three years later, leaving her with two small children to support. Then she was obliged to go out washing. Day after day, with her two little children, she went out to work.

One Monday morning she was sent to a very wealthy lady's house to do her washing. She noticed the woman kept close watch of her during the day. When her work was done, the lady began to question her in regard to her relatives. All she could remember was her first adopted mother and then Mrs. Gray taking her after her adopted mother died. The lady said to Mrs. Noels, "You look so much like my own family one would almost take you to be one of them. I would like to learn something of your early life. Give me Mrs. Gray's address, if you can, and I will write to her."

The lady gave her double pay for her day's work, asking her to come back the next Monday to wash. The following Monday found her back at Mrs. Leonard's to do her washing. In the meantime, Mrs. Leonard had written to Mrs. Gray but could gain but very little information from her in regard to Mrs. Noel's life. All she knew of her was that she was left when an infant at a farmhouse on the Arkansas

plains. She thought, perhaps, she might find out something in regard to her parents if she would write to Mrs. Kellie who then lived at L——, Arkansas.

After this second meeting Mrs. Leonard was determined to find out more about Mrs. Noel's early life if in her power to do so, as she bore such a striking resemblance to her own family, and there was a little mystery in the disappearance of a child in her brother's family some twenty-five years before. She had come to the conclusion that Mrs. Noels must be their infant girl. The mother had died at the birth of the child, the father two weeks later, leaving her sole heiress to a large fortune. In case of the infant's death, this wealth was to go to a younger sister of the father, who was at that time in poor circumstances. She had married a poor man some years before. Her parents had disowned her on account of her low marriage. The infant girl had been left in her care. When the baby was five weeks old, the sister and her husband left their town very mysteriously, taking the brother's child with them. No one knew where they went. They were gone for some time and on their return they claimed the infant had died while they were abroad. From that day nothing was ever heard of little Gladdie, as she was named by her mother, before her birth. Consequently the younger sister had come into possession of her brother's wealth, which had been willed to him by his grandfather, a slave owner with a large plantation.

Five years after the sister had come into possession of her brother's estate she started a townsite on the old plantation where now looms quite a city.

Mrs. Leonard visited the farmer's wife where the infant child had been left twenty-five years before. She heard the story from Mrs. Kellie's own lips, how the infant had been left at her home that cold morning. She gave a description of the child's parents, then added that from their appearance one would judge they were people of wealth. The de-

scription tallied with that of Mrs. Leonard's sister and brother-in-law. Mrs. Leonard asked if there was anything left with the baby that would give a clue to the infant's identity.

Mrs. Kellie said that there was nothing left, only a little locket and chain which she had found on the floor while sweeping the next day. The locket contained two pictures, but they were not the pictures of the child's parents. She added that she had always kept the locket thinking she might some time see the little girl and give her the locket because it was left by her mother. She gave the locket to Mrs. Leonard. When Mrs. Leonard saw the pictures she fainted, but was soon restored to consciousness. She said that it was the likeness of her dead brother and his wife. She remembered the locket and chain well. It was the one her brother gave his wife on their wedding morn. The locket was set with little pearls bearing both of their initials.

Mrs. Leonard thanked God that she had at last found her brother's child, then grown into womanhood with children of her own, for she knew now there was not the least doubt but that her washwoman, Mrs. Noels, was no other than her only brother's daughter and sole heiress to the property at L\_\_\_\_, Arkansas.

Mrs. Leonard returned to her home and sent for Mrs. Noels. She told her she would no longer have to toil for daily bread for herself and her children. Mrs. Noels could hardly believe Mrs. Leonard's story, nor realize that she would soon be in possession of a large fortune after toiling so many years for the necessities of life. Steps were taken at once to gain Mrs. Noels' property.

Mrs. Leonard in company with Mrs. Noels went to her sister's house to help Mrs. Noels to recover her fortune. She introduced Mrs. Noels to her sister as their only brother's daughter and the heiress of his property. The sister turned deadly white and fainted away. The shock

of seeing her brother's only child whom she had deserted that cold morning on the Arkansas plains, proved too much for her. As she saw the woman who was the image of her only brother stand before her she knew it must be the little baby she so affectionately kissed and hugged that cold morning for she loved the little one. Those five weeks she had cared for her, the child had become very dear to her. Her husband often threatened to end the little one's life. He said that it was too frail to stand in the way of a fortune for themselves. The aunt would beg for the baby to be spared to her, as it was her dead brother's child whom he had entrusted to her keeping. It was her duty to raise his baby, for her brother's kindness to her. The only way her husband would consent to spare the little life was by her deserting it. She pleaded with her husband to let her keep the little baby but her pleadings had no effect on him. She must either give the child up or he would kill it. So she concluded to desert the child rather than have her killed and he planned the journey driving, by which they were to leave her to others' tender mercies.

The story of what happened to that child afterwards you have already heard, my dear readers. Mrs. Noels received her fortune and with her little ones moved into a beautiful home. From that day on she and the children never knew a want which money could supply.

We know that all things work together for good to them that love God.

THE END.

# A Strange Dream



## A Strange Dream

The sun was just peeping over the hilltop when the widow, Mrs. Howard, roused from her bed. She had not rested well during the night. Her sleep had been disturbed by a frightful dream and she felt so weak and nervous she was hardly able to dress herself; but it was Saturday, and Saturday in the widow's cottage meant a busy day. There were always several garments to be finished and a number of hats to be trimmed, besides her own housework. There was no rest for the widow on that day.

Mrs. Howard prepared the morning meal as usual for herself and her sister who was visiting her. When they were all seated at the breakfast table Mrs. Howard said to her sister: "I must tell you my dream, Jessie. I feel so worried over it, I cannot rest until I tell you the dream, for I know there is trouble of some kind in store for me.

"I dreamed the same thing three times. I thought I saw mother and sister Minnie on top of a building. The building seemed to be on fire and they were trying to put out the flames. I did not discover there was any fire until mother called to me to take my child and run for our lives. It seemed that Cecil was a baby in my arms. Then Minnie said, 'Take Cecil and flee for your life. Mother and I may be disfigured for life, but we will fight the fire until it's out.'

"I started to run with Cecil in my arms. The fire seemed to be all around us. Even the heavens seemed to be on fire. Large pieces of timber and balls of fire seemed to be falling from the heavens and dropping on us. My clothes did not seem to be on fire; but Cecil's were entirely burned from her body. All the clothes she

seemed to have on was one little band left from an under-skirt. I thought to myself, she cannot take cold when the atmosphere is so heated up by the fire.

"I wrapped her in my apron and ran to a railroad bridge, thinking if we could only cross the bridge we would be safe. I did not know what time in the morning it was, whether near train time or not. I looked up and down the track but could not see or hear any train coming. I thought the only way I could cross the bridge was by laying the child down on the rails wrapped up in my apron to which I held, swinging myself under the trestle-work and pulling the baby down to me. I did so; a passenger train whirled over our heads. Had I attempted to cross on top of the trestle-work, baby and I would have been crushed to death. Then I saw a little cabin under a cliff. The cabin was small, but I thought it would shelter us from the fire. When I reached the cabin door, grandmother met me and pulled me inside the cabin. Sister Emma was there with grandma waiting for me. They seemed to know we were coming. I told grandmother I had lost all I had by the fire and asked her if she thought we were safe there. She said, "Yes." Then I heard the crackling of a fire and looked up to the roof. It was all in a blaze. It frightened me so it awakened me. I feel so nervous over the dream. Yet it seems foolish to worry over a dream."

"Sister, dear, do you think we are going to be burned out?"

"No, I hardly think we are, although the dream worries me very much."

The Saturday ended well. Little did the widow dream what the morrow held in store for her or how soon she would be left penniless.

It was a beautiful night in October. The heavens were calm, the trees swayed to and fro on the light current of

air. At nine o'clock three travelers reached their happy little home after a few hours of visiting with friends. On the porch of their home sat an old lady, forlorn and lonely, waiting for a cheering word from those who were always kind to her. An hour or two were happily spent. Then all was hushed in sleep. Nothing marred the quietness of the night until three o'clock, when the wild cry of "Fire" rang out on the clear air and the large town bell rang forth for the last time in its brief history. It aroused those who were sleeping in a little cottage near the bell tower and they sprang to their feet hurriedly, slipped on the first apparel that came handy and rushed out to the street. Soon the rumbling of the hose cart and fire engine was heard near them. It was discovered that the fire was only a few feet from them in a business block of the town.

The calm night was changed to a fiery wind that fanned the fire, playing havoc with all within its reach. It was soon seen that the fire would reach the cottage of a lone widow and her child on a narrow back street.

The widow hurried home and roused her sleeping child. The little one crawled from the bed, rubbed her eyes and said: "Mama, is that the Sunday School bell ringing? I am too sleepy to get up."

"Make haste, my child, in a few minutes we will be left homeless, but we will save what we can."

Few came to their assistance, as no one thought of the poor widow and orphan.

Men, women and children rushed to and fro trying to help those who were in need. In every direction could be heard the wild cries for help as the flames lit up the sky and made it as light as day. Faces of women and children could be seen from second-story buildings calling for help to save their lives ere they perished in the flames. Ladders from all sides were sent up. People

were making their escape through burning windows and doors.

The fire made a brilliant sight. It illumined the valley and the range of mountains south and west of the town with a brightness almost as pronounced as daylight. At times the flames leaped forty and fifty feet into the air carrying with them myriads of sparks. Sharp reports, dull intonations and muffled rumblings, caused by exploding chemicals, powder and gasoline, made up a din which lent a peculiar fascination and excitement to the destruction.

The fire swept on to the widow's cottage which contained all she owned on earth. Piece after piece had been carried from the little building, but was reached afterwards by the flames of the fiery hell. Nothing from the ashes could be identified, only some broken pieces of china and now and then a utensil that had been used in their little kitchen.

The woman and her child fought bravely through the flames and when they could no longer enter the door of what had once been their happy home, they stood by fighting the flames from the building and with tearful eyes watched their goods go up in smoke.

A few thought of the lonely ones and went to their assistance. Half a dozen little boys set bravely to work trying to save what they could from the burning building. The organ, sewing machine, a few chairs and some bedding were saved. Some clothing was carried out but burned within a few feet of the house, also the contents of the shelves of a well-filled millinery store were carried out but were mostly consumed by the fire.

At last an Italian came to the widow's assistance and the few things she had left were carried from place to place to save them from the flames which swept on and surrounded the little spot of earth where the widow was

bravely fighting for the little she had saved. At last the Italian said that it was impossible to save anything more and they must run for their lives.

Although stifled with the smoke she fought her way through the burning grass to the place where her organ had been left. The back of the organ facing the fire was so hot that she could not touch it with her hands. She called to the Italian for help. In a moment he was at her side. They succeeded in getting the organ near a deep creek, but the bank being very steep it was impossible to carry it down. She told the Italian to dump it over anyway. It would burn if left there. They gave the organ a push and down the bank it went till it reached the bottom of the creek. Mrs. Howard ran to secure other things she saw were in danger, when she heard a man on a burning building call to her to flee for her life as the one hundred gallon gasoline tank near by was on fire and would explode in a few minutes.

The warning was none to soon. Mrs. Howard stepped backwards with what she could carry in her arms. The tank exploded. The blaze flashed in her face and in a dazed condition she fell backwards to the earth. The fire swept around her. In a few moments she regained consciousness. She heard again the wild screams from a dozen voices:

“Run for your life or you will be burned to death.”

Shocked and blinded by the explosion she fled to the place where her sister and child had taken refuge in the creek bottom. They sheltered themselves under a cliff away from the intense heat. The crackling of the fire and the shrieking cries of homeless ones still pierced their ears. Here they waited for the worst while others not so fortunate were pacing the street in their night clothes hunting a place of shelter.

Their once beautiful town of L———. lay in a smouldering heap of ruins. The business part of the town was a thing of the past.

The widow's family were the last ones thought of as she had taken refuge away from the smouldering mass of ruins. The only thing visible for blocks around was a pile of smoking ashes, wreckage and cinders.

After the fire was under control, the widow crept from her place of safety to the place where her home had stood. Alas! everything had burned. Not even a small piece of timber was left.

She returned to her sister and daughter. Her sister was in a critical condition from the excitement of the fire. She needed help at once. There was no one near so the widow could send for a physician. Although nearly exhausted herself with a sprained knee she was obliged to hunt for a physician. The offices which were near them had burned. The telephone wires were all down; what should she do? She knew where Dr. Gobland lived. She would go to his residence.

Her knee had become so swollen and painful she was obliged to sit down in the street and rest.

She finally succeeded in reaching the dwelling, but he was not at home. His office had not burned as she had supposed, he was there.

She knew nearly everyone in town had their own share of trouble that morning, so she did not stop to burden them with her tale of woe, but trudged on until she reached the office, where already a number of patients were waiting to have a burn or a wound dressed.

She waited her turn, but when it came she did not tell the doctor her own ailment, but only of her sister's need, asking him to go at once to the house of the friend to whom she had taken the dear one.

The doctor looked at her and said:

"My opinion is you need help as well as your sister. Wait here until I prepare you a dose of medicine. Your nerves are badly shattered."

She did not hear the last words he said, but was downstairs before he could prepare the medicine. She was anxious to get back to her child and what few things they had left. She did not know what to do or where to go. She did not know at that moment some of her friends were in search of her to offer her a home until she could do better.

Just as she reached the railroad track, she heard someone call to her. At that moment she heard the rattling of the cars. Had she stepped forward instead of backward, she would have been crushed to death by the train. Then her dream flashed to her mind. Yes, she had escaped death from the fire and train, as she had dreamed.

When she neared the place where the child was sitting she remembered no more but fell in a dead faint.

When she regained consciousness, she was lying on a quilt in the shade of a tree and kind friends were ministering to her. A carriage was summoned, a cot placed in it, and Mrs. Howard was laid on the cot and carried to the home of one of her friends where she remained a week. Her sister recovered from her fright and was able to join her in a couple of days.

Kind women came to the widow's assistance, secured her a small cottage and what things were really necessary to keep house with. She had been fortunate enough to save some furniture from the fire besides the organ and sewing machine. The benevolent society moved her furniture to the cottage and for the second time she was placed on a cot and carried to her home.

For two weeks kind Dr. Gobland visited her once or twice a day. She did not want for care or anything. Mrs. Howard never knew before she had so many friends in

the town of L——. She was soon quite comfortable and as soon as she was able to be up on crutches she had all the sewing she could do.

In her dream her sister had said that she would fight the fire until it was out, although she might be disfigured in the face for life. The disfigurement had come to Mrs. Howell's knee instead. It was a bad sprain and would probably bother her as long as she lived. Yet the dear Lord had been good to her.

The heavenly Father always protects the widows and orphans.

THE END.

Agnes, the Little Waif at  
Castle Wall



# Agnes, the Little Waif at Castle Wall

It was the night before Christmas. The sky was covered with black clouds. The wind blew and the rain beat against the window of a beautiful castle. Inside blazed a cheerful fire in the grate. Two bright blue eyes had been watching the fire through the window for some time, then she softly tapped at the door.

The child was thinly clad in a tattered calico gown. A thin shawl covered her head and shoulders, while her toes peeped out of her wornout shoes.

The door was soon opened by the housekeeper.

"Are you Mrs. Gray?" said a young, sweet voice.

"I am, but pray, my little miss, what do you want?"

"Will you please come to my mama? She is very sick and she says she is going to die, I am so afraid she is."

"What is your mother's name, my dear, and where do you live?"

"My mama's name is Mrs. Todd. We live down in the alley off Regent street in the old green house."

"Why did you come to me for help?"

"O, because," said the child—and she began to cry—"mama said that you were such a nice lady she knew you would come to her. You know mama used to wash for you."

"Oh, you are Mrs. Todd's daughter?"

"I am Agnes Todd. My mama's so sick, please hurry to her," said the child as she turned to go.

"Stay, my child," said Mrs. Gray. "You are too thinly clad to face such a storm as this. You can remain in my room, while I go to see your mama."

Taking the child by the hand, she led her to her own warm room. Seating her in a big armchair she told Agnes to remain there until she returned. "You must

not leave the room for I am only Lord Badger's house-keeper, and if he should find you in any of the other rooms he would be very angry. He has told me time and again never to take another waif into the house."

Agnes soon fell fast asleep in her chair.

Mrs. Gray, returned for such things as she needed to make Mrs. Todd comfortable.

Finding the child asleep she laid her on the lounge and threw a quilt over her, thinking Agnes would rest there until she herself should return.

When Agnes awoke she found herself alone in the room. The fire was out, but the light was burning. She wondered where she was and what to do. Then she thought of what Mrs. Gray had told her about remaining there. So she got up and began to look around to see what she could see, when her eyes spied a door opening from the hall into another room. Anxious like any child to know what was in the room, she opened the door and peeped inside.

There was no one in the room, but a big fire blazed in the grate. She was cold, so she thought she would step inside and warm herself by the fire. No one would see her. She ventured to go to the fire, warmed herself, then began to look around the room. It was the most beautiful room she had ever seen. The large library doors stood open.

Agnes helped herself to a book; but as there were no pictures in it, she soon became weary of it and laid it aside. She was looking for a book of "Fairy Tales," with jolly old Santa Claus in it, with a big bag full of toys for little boys and girls like herself. She did not succeed in finding a book of that kind in the library. Then she noticed the writing desk standing open and thought she would write a note to Santa Claus. Maybe he would find her in that beautiful house.

She seated herself at the writing desk and wrote the following note:

"Dear Santa Claus:

"Mama said you would not come to me this year, because we are so awful poor; but oh, I want a nice dollie so bad; a set of dishes, and a nice warm dress, like I used to have when poor papa was alive and I went to Sunday school long time ago. Now, dear Santa, I will pin this note to my stockings and I hope you will find it, for tomorrow I am eight years old and I would like a dollie, oh, so much.

"Your Agnes."

"P. S. Please, dear Santa, bring my mother a nice warm shawl, for her old one is awful ragged."

Then she sat down before the big warm fire, took off her shoes and stockings, put the note in one of the stockings and pinned it at the side of the fire place. Then she lay down on the big buffalo rug before the fire and was soon fast asleep, while her little stockings were steaming by the fire.

The door opened, and a stately old gentleman walked in. He was quite surprised to find a pair of stockings hanging before his fireplace. It was the first time in his life that a pair of little stockings had ever hung there. But where was the owner of the stockings? The room seemed unoccupied; but all at once a little form began to move before the fire.

He stepped forward, and there stretched out on his rug lay the most beautiful little girl he had ever seen. Her long golden curls were matted over her shoulders. He had often read of the Sleeping Beauty, but he had never seen any one like her before.

He raked the coals together and threw on more wood. The noise awakened the child and she raised herself upon her elbows and looked around.

"I thought I heard a noise," she said to herself. "Maybe it was Santa Claus bringing my dollie. I'll be quiet and make him think I'm asleep."

Then she closed her large blue eyes and was soon fast asleep, dreaming of fairies and Santa Claus and the beautiful Christmas trees loaded down with toys he was carrying around to his children.

When Lord Badger was sure she was fast asleep, he came out of his hiding place. When he looked at the stockings again he noticed the little white note peeping out of the top. He took it out and read it, then placed it back, put his hands in his pockets and paced the floor in a deep study. Whose child she was and how she came to be there, was more than he could tell. He thought it must be another waif whom Mrs. Gray had brought in from the street though he had strictly forbidden her to do so. This beautiful child did not look like a waif, although she was thinly clad. She was a lovely child. There was something about her face which reminded him of a very dear friend he had years before. What was he to do with her? He could not turn her out on the street such a stormy night. He would ring for Mrs. Gray and ask her advice about the child; but instead of Mrs. Gray answering the bell, another servant appeared at the door. She told him Mrs. Gray had gone out early in the afternoon and had not yet returned. He questioned her about the child, but she knew nothing of her being there. He lifted the child to a big arm chair and covered her up with the rug.

At that moment Mrs. Gray appeared at the door breathless. Her little charge had gone, she said, she knew not where. She had been detained longer with the sick

woman than she had expected and little Agnes had become tired of waiting, she supposed, for her to return and had started home by herself. As it was so dark outside she was afraid the child would get lost.

Lord Badger pointed to the little pair of stockings which hung at the fireside, then to the chair where lay the sleeping child. There Mrs. Gray found her little charge and told her story to Lord Badger. How the child had come to her during the afternoon for help for her sick mother; how in all probability the mother would only last a few weeks longer, for she was very low with consumption. She said she would take the child to her room for the night, then she would return to the mother; but she would be home early enough in the morning to look after the child.

Lord Badger told her to let the child remain where she was until morning as she was resting quite comfortably there and he would take care of her.

Mrs. Gray was more than surprised at Lord Badger offering to care for the little one, but gladly let him do so. He showed her the note in the stocking and asked her if she would go with him to do a little shopping for the child. Mrs. Gray was delighted at this and they went together down to the toy shop.

The first thing they bought was a dollie with large blue eyes and long golden curls. Lord Badger declared it looked exactly like the child herself. They did not stop buying until they both had all they could carry home in their arms. Then Lord Badger spoke of a shawl for Agnes's mother; but Mrs. Gray told him Agnes's mother would not need a shawl long and it was useless to buy one.

When they started home Lord Badger's eye caught sight of some Christmas trees in a shop window they were passing.

"We must have a tree," he said, "to put the presents on."

So a tree was bought and sent to their home. The tree arrived as soon as they did and Mrs. Gray trimmed the tree and put the presents on it for little Agnes before returning to Mrs. Todd's house.

Lord Badger accompanied her, and when they entered the room where Mrs. Todd lay, even Lord Badger himself shuddered. The room was so bare of furniture it looked very cold and forlorn. Mrs. Todd was lying on a low bed looking very ill. Upon inquiry they found she had been confined to her bed almost two weeks. Mrs. Gray had missed her for the past two Mondays but thought perhaps she had moved away, and secured another wash woman. Piece by piece the poor woman had disposed of her furniture and many other little articles she had in her house. When the small amount of money this brought had become exhausted she had been obliged to sell some of her clothing in order to supply their actual necessities. Tonight she did not even have fuel to burn.

Lord Badger went out and returned in a few moments with a large bundle of fuel. He made a fire and the little room seemed much brightened by the red glimmer of the flickering fire. Mrs. Gray had taken some tea and many other little comforts to the sick woman.

Lord Badger returned to his home after bidding the invalid goodnight telling her not to worry about her little one as he would look after her until morning, then he would bring her home.

Mrs. Gray remained with the sick woman during the night. When the tea-kettle began to send out its puffing breath of steam, Mrs. Gray prepared a cup of tea for the invalid and made a delicate slice of toast of which she persuaded her to eat a little. Mrs. Gray talked very

kindly to the sick woman but only a few times during the night did the invalid have strength to talk to her.

"Agnes says she must go when I go, Mrs. Gray, for she thinks there will be no one else to take care of her if mother goes. Perhaps I may get better if I rest; but I have a sister who lives in France and I wish you would be so kind as to write and tell her of my failing health and that I tried to reach her to see her once more. Tell her about little Agnes and I think she will come and get her, my lamb, my darling."

Mrs. Gray promised to write to the sister and pleaded with her to try to rest until morning. The poor woman closed her eyes and tried to sleep; but her mind was too much upon her child to rest much. Every little while she would rouse up and say: "O, Agnes, Agnes, my darling. Who will care for you when mother is gone?"

Mrs. Gray tried to comfort her. She told her if anything should happen to her that little Aggy should be well cared for. She would write to her sister at once and if her sister did not take Agnes she would see that she was cared for. Agnes was a beautiful child and most any one who was able to do so, would be willing to give her a home.

The next morning Lord Badger with his little charge returned to the home of the poor widow. Mrs. Todd was more than delighted to see her little daughter so happy over the nice presents which dear old Santa had brought her. She told her mother about the note she had written and how dear old Santa had come and found her in that beautiful room of Lord Badger's.

"Mama, dear, if I had stayed at home, Santa would not have found me, because he did not find me last year, and you know he does not visit poor children."

Her mother pressed her to her bosom and asked God to help her to be as happy another Christmas morning as she was then.

The tears rolled down her cheeks at the thought of where she would be another Christmas morning away from her darling and this cruel world; but why should she grieve; had not God been good to her and her child by sending such kind friends to them? She knew her heavenly Father would still care for her little one.

Lord Badger called in a physician who talked awhile with the poor feeble woman, advised simple restoratives and any thing that could help to make her comfortable.

"You need a better room than this, and some one to watch by you, that your mind and body may both rest for a while. Perhaps I can find you a place in the hospital, madam," said he.

"No, sir, no, sir; I would rather die here," she answered. "I have no means to pay for a better home or to hire attendants and I must keep my child with me. It will only be for a little while."

"Do you think that a removal would be injurious to her, doctor?" asked Lord Badger. "I will gladly take her to my own home where she can be cared for while she lives. I think as you say she needs some one to watch by her, and to rest mind and body. Mrs. Gray can take care of her and look after Agnes if they were both in my house."

Mrs. Gray was agreeably surprised at Lord Badger's kind offer.

"That is very noble of you, Lord Badger, and the heavenly Father will bless you for it," said the doctor. "Nothing can be worse for the sick woman than to remain in this uncomfortable place. I will assist in seeing her safely removed to your house if you say so, and the sooner the better."

Lord Badger soon had a carriage at the door with a comfortable bed arranged for Mrs. Todd's removal. She was soon safely settled in Lord Badger's beautiful home of which Agnes had talked so much.

Mrs. Todd waited anxiously for news from her sister. She said she had not seen her for a number of years. Both had married and left home about the same time. Her sister had settled in France, while the brief period of her own married life had been spent in England.

Two weeks had passed since Mrs. Gray wrote to Mrs. Todd's sister, but no answer had come from the letter. Mrs. Gray finally decided to write to the postmaster of the town, Manton, and see if the family mentioned were still living there. She received the answer that the person inquired for died some years ago and the husband with his family had moved to England; but where they were residing he was unable to tell. Mrs. Todd was very much overcome by the sad news of her sister's death.

"God help us! I am indeed desolate. My little daughter must be intrusted to the kind pity and care of strangers."

"Don't feel anxious about little Agnes," said kind Lord Badger. "I will care for her, I will adopt her and she shall be my heiress when I am gone. My home would be desolate now without little Agnes. She is just like a ray of sunshine flitting about the house and grounds, and here is my hand upon it, Mrs. Todd, a pledge and a promise. So rest quietly. Your little one shall be cared for."

Mrs. Todd was contented then and said she could die easy, now that she knew Lord Badger would be a kind father to little Agnes. She would give her to him as a Christmas present for he had made them both so happy on that Christmas day.

Mrs. Todd lived a few days after the promise was given, and then fell peacefully asleep in Jesus. She was laid at rest in the churchyard beside some of Lord Badger's relatives so that little Agnes could visit her mother's grave in after years when she was the heiress of Castle Wall.

Agnes grew more beautiful each year, and often did passersby stop and watch a little girl flitting from bush to bush, plucking the sweetest and most beautiful flowers in the garden to send to some poor little girl or boy who had no flowers and was ill at home.

Many a time did neighbors and friends wonder what had caused the change in Lord Badger, and what had softened his hard heart towards children, and how he ever came to let a child pluck flowers in his gardens where no child had ever been before since he had fallen heir to Castle Wall. They did not know of the love hidden deep in his heart twenty years before for Agnes's mother when he was plain William Smith and not Lord Badger.

Mr. Todd, a wealthy merchant, had come between them and won Agnes Mar for his wife. Mr. Todd failed in business some years after their marriage and at his death left his wife and child penniless.

No child could have been better cared for than little Agnes Todd, now Lord Badger's daughter. A good governess was found for her. Never did she have a want that money could supply and never was there a prouder or happier father than Lord Badger, as he took his walks and drives with little Agnes by his side, arrayed in the most magnificent costumes.

When Lord Badger became too feeble to care for himself, Agnes was constantly at his bedside. Lord Badger never had cause to regret finding the little waif in his room that Christmas Eve.

When Agnes was twenty years old Lord Badger died and left her heiress of his beautiful Castle. Agnes had grown into a beautiful young lady. She was tall, slender and graceful. Her golden hair gave her almost the appearance of an angel. Many of the nobility sought her hand in marriage. She chose Lord Churbey as her companion for life, and the sun never shone on a happier or more worthy couple than they.

Now little children play upon the lawn of Castle Wall. As Lady Churbey sees little Agnes picking flowers for the poor she thinks of her own girlhood days, and the night she came as a little waif to Castle Wall. Little did she think then what happiness was in store for her inside.

THE END.









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